

**CLASSICAL AND ENGLISH HIGH SCHOOL  
(WORCESTER HIGH SCHOOL)**

**1845 – 1892**

**HAPPENINGS**

**1890-1892 and EXTRAS**

**1890 -1892**

**1890**

September 1890 beheld the school under a new management, Mr. John G. Wight, from Cooperstown NY, assumed the principalship.

**Note: Not only did Alfred Roe step down from being principal, he also moved on from teaching at the school.**

**1891**

The progress of the year was not interrupted by any startling matters...The Sumner Club was permitted to return to the school building. Field sports were reinstituted, the Dickinson banner was then again contested, and the boys were allowed to join the **Interscholastic Association for Athletic Sports**. The giving of memorials to the school was again encouraged, and the senior class presented a crayon of Charles Dickens. A public entertainment was given in the main hall for the benefit of the baseball club followed by a reception hosted by the principal and his wife. For the first time since 1878, the graduating exercises were in Mechanics Hall, a delightful change from the over-heated hall of the school building.



#### **Note: Artificial Intelligence Overview**

The football team was the first Worcester High School team to compete against another high school. The team traveled to Westborough via a 7:55 a.m. train. Worcester High School won a 12–0 victory over Westborough High School. Worcester High School scored 3 touchdowns. For the season, Worcester High School was 1-4-1.

This game, played on Thanksgiving in 1891, is recognized as the origin of a 133-year-old local holiday football tradition.

In 1891, American football games were scored using the following point values, largely due to rules established by Walter Camp:

- Touchdown: 4 points
- Goal from field kick (Field Goal): 5 points
- Goal after touchdown (Conversion kick): 2 points
- Safety touch-down (Safety): 2 points

This scoring system made field goals worth more than touchdowns, which is a stark contrast to the modern game where a touchdown is worth 6 points and a field goal is worth 3 points. The value of scoring plays changed frequently in the late 19th century as the rules of American football evolved from its rugby-like origins. In 1891, American football games were scored using the following point values, largely due to rules established by Walter Camp:

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#### 1892 – Last Paragraph of Roe’s History

For the good or bad, the tale is told. Where hundreds have finished, thousands began. Nothing in these pages could add to the record nor detract from it. There is not a state in the Union which does not hold one or more persons who regard the Worcester High School with peculiar affection. Though divided from this date, nothing can alter the history already made, and whatever triumphs may await the two schools, for many years, there will be a large number of people who will not cease to cherish the memory of the Worcester Classical and English High School.

**THE NEW SCHOOL ON IRVING STREET WAS DEDICATED ON SEPTEMBER 5, 1892 AS ENGLISH HIGH SCHOOL.**

**Note: Artificial Intelligence Overview**

**In 1892, Worcester High School was divided into two distinct institutions—Classical High School and English High School—primarily due to rapid population growth and the need to accommodate different educational paths.**

**The key reasons for the division included:**

- **Population Growth:** Significant growth in Worcester during the latter half of the 19th century made a single high school building insufficient for the city's students.
- **Need for Additional Space:** To address overcrowding, the city constructed a second high school building on Irving Street, which opened in 1892 (often cited as fully operational by 1893).
- **Curricular Specialization:** The split allowed the schools to specialize in two prevailing types of 19th-century secondary education:
  - **Classical High School:** Remained in the original building and focused on a curriculum of Latin and classical literature intended for students preparing for college.
  - **English High School:** Moved to the new Irving Street building and focused on a "noncollegiate" general education, including natural sciences, history, and commercial studies.

**In 1914, English High School was abolished, and Classical High School moved into the Irving Street building. English High School was officially abolished to reorganize the city's secondary education system and accommodate a major shift in student interests toward vocational training.**

**The primary factors leading to its closure were:**

- **Abolition and Reorganization:** The city decided to abolish English High School as a separate entity and consolidate its resources. The Classical High School then moved from its original building (the Richardson building) into the Irving Street building that had previously housed the English High School.
- **Rise of Commercial Education:** By the early 20th century, there was a growing demand for business and commercial training. This led to the creation of the High School of Commerce, which eventually occupied the old Richardson building that Classical High School had vacated.

- **Low Enrollment and Retention:** Reports from the era noted that the high school system faced difficulties, including fluctuating enrollments and high dropout rates. Many students left school before graduation to enter the workforce or moved out of the city.
- **Curricular Consolidation:** As educational philosophies shifted, the strict divide between the "classical" (college preparatory) and "English" (general/commercial) tracks began to blur, making a single, more flexible school structure more efficient for the city's needs.

## **EXTRAS**

**Note:** The extras (what today we call Appendices) include about twice as many pages as Roe's history. They include an alphabetical list of all of the students who attended the school, all of the teachers and the years they taught at the school, each year's school song, all of the programs from graduation exercises and detailed information about items and organizations that received only a cursory mention in the history.

## **Courses of Study**

**Note:** Today, students must attend the school which serves the district in which they live. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, once the Irving Street building opened, Worcester's high school students attended either of two high schools depending upon which course of study the student selected.

### **Note: Artificial Intelligence Overview**

When Worcester High School split in 1892, the students were divided by gender and academic track, with boys taking the classical/college-prep courses at the older 1871 building, while girls and commercial/English students moved to the new Irving Street building, establishing the first separate female high school (English High School for Girls) and a new mixed-gender commercial school, creating a dual high school system for Worcester's secondary education.

Here's the breakdown:

- **1871 Building:** This became Classical High School, focusing on rigorous college preparatory studies for boys.
- **Irving Street Building (New):** This housed the new English High School for Girls, focusing on English, modern languages, and commercial studies for young women, alongside a co-ed commercial program.

This division separated the traditional academic track (boys) from the modern/commercial/female tracks, a significant shift in Worcester's public education.

**Note: One of Roe's Extras is an 1880 school committee – approved High School Curriculum (see below) which describes three courses of study rather than the two Artificial Intelligence listed. In addition, this curriculum nowhere states that any course of study was gender-restricted. In addition, another school committee report in 1888 recommending that a new building should built, they voted that “the line of courses of study...one to be emphasized as Classical High School and the other as the English High School, EACH FOR BOTH SEXES”**

**I believe Roe's Extra rather than the Artificial Intelligence Overview because given the date of the report being the same as the date Roe began his principalship, he may have had a hand in developing it or at the very least he had to implement it. Also, unless the second School Committee report was overturned in later years, it clearly states both e=sexes in both schools.**

#### Roe's Curriculum Extra

In this school, there are three distinct courses of study. The first (I.) is designed for those who are preparing for college; the second (II.) for others who wish to study the ancient classics; the third (III.) or English course, for all others.

Till 1880, the preceding course obtained, with some modifications. In that year, the following schemes were ordained by the school committee, and the same practically held to the end of the school. In the English division, first year, book-keeping at first took the place of biology, and, later, United States history supplanted both. The most marked change was the addition of one year to the college preparatory course, thus conforming to the time required by the best New England schools. In 1891, a few changes were made, but they did not essentially change the scope of the courses. The three courses, college, classical and English, are numbered 1, 2 and 3.

#### FIRST YEAR.

- I. Latin grammar, reader and composition, outlines of history, algebra and physiology, (once a week).
- II. The same, except the possible substitution of German for Latin.
- III. The same, save the substitution of biology and botany for Latin or German.

#### SECOND YEAR.

- I. Caesar, Greek grammar and lessons, geometry, Latin composition.
- II. Latin or German, geometry, physics, French.
- III. History, physics, geometry, French.

#### THIRD YEAR.

- I. Ovid, Anabasis, Greek composition, Latin composition, French.
- II. Latin or German, rhetoric, chemistry, French.
- III. History, rhetoric, chemistry, French.

#### FOURTH YEAR.

- I. Virgil, Homer and Greek composition, Greek and Roman history, Latin composition.
- II. Latin or German, astronomy, English literature, geology, civil government, French.
- III. Political economy, astronomy, English literature, botany, geology, civil government, French.

#### FIFTH YEAR.

I. Virgil and Cicero, Herodotus and Greek at sight, physics, French.

The college course is subject to such modifications as the changes in college requirements may necessitate.

Weekly exercises of the whole school in music, drawing, (optional) elocution and composition.

During the fourth and fifth years, pupils in the college course will pursue the requirements in English for admission to Harvard College.

Book-keeping, open to all classes, is taught by special instruction during the second half of the year.

The study of English literature during the first half of the senior year, includes reading from authors as Shakespeare, Chaucer, Bacon, etc.

Three years in the classical division prepares for the Technical school.

No one should leave this school to enter the Normal school before the end of the third year; and all who desire to enter that school are earnestly advised to complete first the course in this.

The exercises in "elocution and composition" include the study of Bryant, Longfellow, Whittier, Lowell, Irving, Hawthorne, Holmes and Bayard Taylor. Two of the writers are read yearly, the course extending through the four years of a pupil's stay in the school.

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#### EUCLEIA SOCIETY

February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1858 is considered the natal day of this oldest debating society in Worcester. The secretary's books will show the names of many bright men of today, who, in boyish scrawls, there inscribed their names. During all these years, there have been brief periods of suspended animation, but in the main, the boys have held on, and once a week in term time, have done their best to acquire the art of debate. In former days, their meetings were noisy, but no more profitable. However, if the members did quarrel, it was only a fair sample of what they had to do in later years.

After the opening of the Walnut Street building, the society met in the lower or ward room of the building. Afterward, they were allowed to use the drawing room in the second story, in some respects an ideal place for such a purpose, but when it was taken for school purposes, they were compelled to move to the superintendent's hall, and finally to Room 11 in the school building where they still are assembling on Friday nights. June 20, 1885, at a regular meeting, the principal of the school gave to the society as a gavel stand, a chain shot picked up on Bunker Hill, properly mounted, and a gavel whose head was made from wood from Old Ironsides and the handle from Andersonville Stockade. Three periods of national peril are thus constantly indicated.

### ATLETHEIA SOCIETY

That girls might have equal privileges with boys in debate, several members of the senior class were asked to meet the principal in Room 6, Friday, December 2, 1881. The matter was fully discussed and its importance appreciated. At the next meeting, one week later, an organization got started, and the name Aletheia was chosen...Thrown open to the girls of the school, the society is now in its 11<sup>th</sup> year and doing excellent work for its members. In his effort to keep patriotism ever prominent in the minds of the pupils, the principal of the school, mindful that these young women were the future wives and mothers of the city, gave to them June 19, 1885, a gavel stand made from the screw of Farragut's flagship, Hartford, and a gavel whose head was once a part of the Old Elm on Boston Commons, and whose handle was also a part of the Hartford. Regular meetings are held every Friday afternoon in Room 6.

### SUMNER CLUB

Dissentions are always possible. Factions had long existed in Eucleia, and trouble of this sort culminated in the middle of the school years 1883-4. The boys who withdrew secured from the superintendent the privilege of meeting in his hall and taking the name as above. They proceeded to debate and declaim and to pursue a course of usefulness, still in progress. In time, they came up to the school building, the lecture room, where they have been since save the little more than a year's interval, 1889-'91, when they hired quarters in the city. Some of the brightest boys, among the recent graduates, pay something akin to homage to memories of the club. Like other societies, this one has historic gavel and stand and from the same source. The stand is made from a fragment of an immense shell exploded in Fort Sumpter; the head of the gavel from wood taken from Worcester's Old South Church, the handle from the mast of the frigate, Congress, destroyed by the Merrimac in Hampton Roads. The meetings are Friday nights.

### GLEE CLUB

As its name indicates, this is a musical organization, formed in 1883, and made up from those pupils of the school who excel in song. Its first public exhibition, assisted by competent soloists, was June 13, 1884; and each year since that time, it has favored parents and friends with a public exercise of a pleasant and profitable character...regular meetings are held each Monday afternoon in the main hall at 4 o'clock.

### ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

High School Athletics may be dated from the Spring of 1885, when Walter P. Hall, '85, was selected president, and the field day came June 13, on the Agricultural grounds. The same year had a Fall meet, September 30. In 1886, '87 and '88, there were Spring and Fall meets, but in 1889, there was a Spring meet only. The next year had no contests at all, the High School Committee refusing to permit it. The Spring of 1891 saw the association revived. Under the stimulus of the banner, presented to the school by George S. Dickinson, '81, for annual class competition, rivalry of a friendly yet animated character distinguishes their annual meets.



## JOURNALISM

Lying very quietly upon the shelves of one part of the school library are several volumes of what was known in its day as *The Excelsior*. They consist of written sheets, bound together, the same having been read before the school. These date through the later "Forties" and early "Fifties." Unfortunately, they abound in school boy and girl ideas of wisdom rather than in school items. Consequently, their quiet is seldom disturbed.

The *Thesaurus*, however, was a school paper of merit, running through thirty-two numbers from November, 1859 to May 3, 1866. It was not misnamed. It is a treasury of facts pertaining to the school of its day. From this venture to the High School *Argus*, there is a lapse of nearly twenty years. The *Argus*... bore date on its first number, April 1, 1885. It was, however, no April fool, and through its eighteen numbers to January 20, 1886, it maintained a character worthy of the journalistic ability since displayed in actual business life by the boys who, in their school days, wrote, set type and struck off their own papers.

The *Argus* ceased because the *Academe* had begun. No.1 of the latter paper bears the date January 19, 1886...It was at first printed monthly and was an exceedingly creditable paper. During its second year, it became semi-monthly...and it was a source of pride to many in the school. The third year was equally successful...as was the fourth...Then came the orders or rules from the High School Committee, and the paper was suspended till the winter of 1892, when it was again started successfully.

During the first year of the *Academe*, certain boys of the senior class took exception to some of the paper's words or ways and so started a journal of their own. It was called the *Senior Critic* and it ran through twelve numbers from January 5, 1886 to June 14 of the same year. It was exceedingly bright and vigilant...In looking over the names of the boys who were conspicuous in their management of the *Argus*, *Academe*, and *Senior Critic*, it is interesting to note that most of them have taken to journalism for a vocation, and that they are winning deserved success therein.

**Note: *Argus* was revived as the name of the school's literary journal when Miss Shaughnessy joined the faculty in 1921. It remained the name of the literary journal until Classical's end of days.**

## HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

Feeling the desirableness of a union of those who had been members of the school, preparatory meetings were held in May 1886, looking to the formation of an association. As a result, such a union came into being...The first reception was given to the class of 1886, and such receptions have been features of gradation since...Membership of note of the association are some of the most successful individuals of Worcester in all walks of life.

## BUILDINGS

The first high school building...is still used for school purposes, though moved to the north side of Walnut Street. Whatever the first estimates of the edifice, it has not been considered palatial

for many years. Its dimensions are 74x58, two and one-half stories, with basement. Its interior has been changed many times. The “stairs up” and “stairs down” of long ago had their peculiar significance then. The classical pupils went “up, “while those in English remained “down.”

The structure, whose representation forms the frontispiece of this book, has been, with justice, one of the sources of architectural pride in Worcester...It is especially fortunate in its location. In the very center of the city, almost within speaking distance of the city hall, it is yet so far removed from the clamor and commotion of the street, that quiet, as far as the outside world is concerned, ever reigns. While its situation may not satisfy those who love to look at fine buildings from remote points, it does far better in subserving, perfectly, the end for which it was erected. While constructed to hold 500 pupils, seats have been found in it for more than 800 at one time. Originally finished in white, the walls of the corridors, rooms and main hall have been tinted or frescoed in later years.

Of course, twenty years have made advances in school house architecture, still the Maple Street edifice has advantages that many later ones do not possess. The spaciousness of its halls impresses the visitor on entering. The library, at the right, and the drawing room at the left, are now places of peasant resort. Guarding the entrance to the lecture room are the busts of **Willie Grout** and General Grant, while upon the walls, just back of these, are the Rebellion memorial tablets; under glass, immediately behind the busts are the American colors, while on either hand, stretching around the hall above the dado, are specimens of the artistic work done by pupils...Upon the walls and in the corners of the corridors may be seen memorials of classes. In Room 22 are beautiful Alexandrine engravings... and there is the grand piano in the main hall...

The building abounds in tokens of generosity of Worcester citizens. The clock in the tower, the electric connections, once in use, and the great bell, upon which the hours are struck, are among them...Aside from these gifts, the cost of the building, including land, was about \$170,000. It was formally dedicated December 30, 1871.

#### **Note: [AI Overview](#)**

**Willie Grout** (John William Grout) was an 18-year-old student from Worcester, MA whose death in the Civil War at the Battle of Ball's Bluff inspired the famous song, "The Vacant Chair," as his family kept an empty chair at their Thanksgiving table in his memory, making him a poignant symbol of wartime loss in Worcester and beyond.

#### **Who He Was:**

- **Young Soldier:** Born July 25, 1843, in Worcester, Grout was a bright student who joined the 15th Massachusetts Infantry as a 2nd Lieutenant.
- **Tragic Death:** He was killed at the Battle of Ball's Bluff on October 21, 1861, and his body was recovered weeks later after floating downriver to Washington, DC.

#### **His Fame:**

- **"The Vacant Chair":** After his death, his family kept a "vacant chair" at their table, a gesture that inspired a poem by family friend Henry S. Washburn.
- **Popular Song:** George F. Root set the poem to music, and "The Vacant Chair" became incredibly popular, symbolizing the personal cost of the war for families.

**Legacy in Worcester:**

- **Local Hero:** Grout was the first from Worcester to die in the war, making his story deeply personal for the city.
- **Historical Museum:** His uniform and personal items are preserved at the Worcester Historical Museum.
- **Memorial:** The Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War formed a camp named in his honor, Willie Grout Camp No. 25.