

**William A. Howland** (1 May 1871 – 3 May 1945) was an American [operatic bass](#), [voice teacher](#), [composer](#), [conductor](#) and university administrator. He was the head of the music department at the [University of Michigan](#) from 1900-1914. In 1914 he co-founded the [Detroit Institute of Musical Arts](#); serving as the school's vice-president and head of the vocal department until his death 31 years later.<sup>[1]</sup>

## Early life and education

Born in [Worcester, Massachusetts](#), Howland was the youngest of six children born to Emma Lane Howland and her husband Dr. Asa Allan. His mother was a direct descendant of [John Howland](#), a [pilgrim](#) who travelled from England to North America on the [Mayflower](#), signed the [Mayflower Compact](#), and helped found [Plymouth Colony](#). His father was a prominent [dental surgeon](#) and was notably the first president of the [Dental Association of New England](#).<sup>[2]</sup> William served as president of the [Pilgrim John Howland Society](#) from 1924 to 1945.<sup>[3]</sup>

After attending [grammar school](#) and graduating from [English High School](#) in Worcester in 1889, Howland moved to New York City, where he pursued music studies, sang in various churches, and also taught singing through 1894.<sup>[1]</sup> In New York he studied singing with [Frederick Bristol](#), music theory and composition with [Dudley Buck](#), conducting with [Frank Damrosch](#), piano with [Albert Ross Parsons](#), and the organ with Richard T. Percy. He also pursued further studies abroad during the summer months of the early 1890s; studying the [oratorio](#) repertoire in London with [Alberto Randegger](#) and Frederick Walker, and music composition, musical analysis, and opera with [Alfred Lorenz](#) in Germany.<sup>[2]</sup>

## Career

Howland made both his professional concert and opera debuts in New York City in 1889. In 1892–1893 he was a member of Boston's [Ideal Opera Company](#), also known as the "Bostonians".<sup>[4]</sup> In 1894 he returned to Worcester<sup>[1]</sup> to assume the post of music director of Piedmont Church; a position he held for five years. During that time, he was also active as an oratorio soloist in concerts in New York and Boston.<sup>[2]</sup> In 1895 he was a soloist at the [Worcester Music Festival](#).<sup>[4]</sup> On June 24, 1896, he married Fredreka Shaw Barnard (1870–1964), with whom he had two children: John and Dorothy.<sup>[5]</sup>

In 1900 he moved to [Ann Arbor, Michigan](#), to assume the post of director of the music department at the [University of Michigan](#). He remained in that role until the conclusion of the 1913–1914 school year. He notably served as the conductor of the [University of Michigan Men's Glee Club](#) from 1911 to 1914. In 1914 he co-founded the [Detroit Institute of Musical Arts](#) which is now a part of [Marygrove College](#). He served as the school's vice-president and head of the vocal department until his death in 1945