

An Association of Our Own
A Look Back at 130 Years of Unity and Service

by Stephen W. Herring, Class of 1976

Part One

Published in The ECHO, Spring 2004

On July 10, 2004, the Alumni Association, Framingham State College, will be 130 years old—an important milestone for a remarkable association made up of the graduates of a remarkable school.

Graduates of Framingham felt the need to get together long before that desire was formalized with the adoption of our association's constitution on July 10, 1874. Reunions of one form or another were a regular occurrence going back to the years when the school was still at its original Lexington location, after only four classes had graduated (two in 1841 and two in 1842). Those early reunions were called conventions, and they were held every two or three years through the West Newton years (1844-1853) and into the Framingham era, until 1864. Then there was a hiatus of several years. Perhaps it was the realization that some form of permanent organization was needed to ensure a regular renewing of old ties that brought several graduates together in 1872 to begin the organizing process. They formed a committee headed by Ellen Chandler, a graduate of the February 1864 class, to frame a constitution for a new association of Framingham graduates.

By July of 1874, with the number of living graduates at 1,188, the constitution was ready. It had a preamble stating the intent and purpose of this new organization: "Desirous of doing what we can to elevate the teacher's profession, and remembering that 'in union there is strength,' we, the Graduates of the Framingham State Normal School, do hereby form ourselves into an association for mutual benefit and instruction, and adopt the following constitution."

The constitution consisted of six articles. The name of the group was to be, The Alumni Association of the Framingham Normal School (as the school was then for women only, Alumni was changed to the more correct Alumnae in 1886). Officers were named and membership "taxes" were to be no more than \$1.50. At the ratification convention held on July 10 a seventh article was added setting the frequency of elections at every two years, a practice continued to the present time.

Our first constitution also embraced the school's teachers as members. That would explain why the association's first president was not a graduate. Annie Johnson had been serving as Framingham's first female principal for eight years when she accepted the presidency of the association, and had been on the teaching staff going back to 1861. It was under Miss Johnson that the practice teaching program at the school began its long

and successful run, bringing attention and acclaim to the school and its graduates.

Other officers elected that day were Emily Bullard, class of 1864 and advanced class of 1865, as secretary, and Amelia Davis, class of 1864 and advanced class of 1867, as treasurer. While Annie Johnson and Emily Bullard would only serve single two-year terms, Miss Davis became a near permanent fixture as treasurer, serving twenty terms. She stepped down in 1914, the same year she retired from teaching Mathematics and Astronomy at Framingham, ending a remarkable forty-seven year career as an educator. By every account Miss Davis was a popular and beloved teacher. In 1910, while still teaching and serving as treasurer, the Class of 1892 established in her honor the Amelia Davis Fund for Incapacitated Teachers. That fund continues to be administered by the association today as the Amelia Davis Fund for Incapacitated Alumni, its trustees chaired by former Executive Secretary Marilyn Foley, class of 1958.

If we consider Amelia Davis as one of the early pillars of the alumni association, certainly another would be Ellen Hyde. Miss Hyde was Annie Johnson's successor as principal of the Framingham Normal School. After three years in that position she also became president of the alumnae association. Unlike Annie Johnson, Ellen Hyde could claim full alumna status as a graduate of the Framingham class of 1862. Her tenure as principal covered twenty-three years, from 1875 to 1898, during which she strengthened and expanded the practice teaching program. After retiring she remained president of the association until 1916. Her thirty-eight years of service to alumnae earned her recognition as *president emeritus*. The high point of that service was most likely her role in organizing the school's fiftieth anniversary in 1889. For that occasion over 400 graduates gathered at Plymouth Church on the Framingham Centre common and heard Miss Hyde admonish them to "keep the old school abreast with all the best progress of the future." Collecting and preserving graduates' reports of progress and successes was then and still is a vital service of the association.

When Ellen Hyde stepped down as principal of the school in 1898 a special meeting of the association was called to do her honor. At that meeting it was voted that the association's scholarship fund be named in honor of Miss Hyde. Today that is the Ellen Hyde Load Fund, offering interest-free assistance to FSC students in need. Its trustees are chaired by Gloria Aspesi, class of 1957 and graduate school 1962, former principal of Framingham's Juniper Hill Elementary School.

Ellen Hyde was succeeded as principal by Henry Whittemore, a much respected and admired administrator whose eighteen years as head of the school are remembered on campus today with the Whittemore Memorial Gate and the Whittemore Library. During the eighteen years when Ellen Hyde was president of the association and Henry Whittemore was principal of the school the alumnae association extended its reach in several ways. The Alumnae Council was formed in 1912 "to represent and act for the association for the furtherance of various important matters." Consisting of the association board and two officers from every class, the council provided a larger working base for planning reunions and dealing with business issues. One of the first orders of business for the council was to help the association become formally

incorporated under the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The corporate charter was finalized on June 11, 1914. It states that the association was being formed “for the purpose of uniting the graduates and teachers of the State Normal School at Framingham in promoting the welfare of the graduates and teachers and of the school.”

Also occurring during this era was the advent of alumnae clubs. These regional organizations gave members living in different parts of the country the opportunity to get together, further the goals of the association, and “carry on the spirit of Framingham” nearer to home. The earliest of these appears to be a New York club founded in 1910. Over the years many clubs provided scholarships and offered student loans. Alumni clubs are a Framingham tradition carried on to this day.

When Ellen Hyde’s service to the alumnae association ended in 1916, Mr. Whittemore followed the example of his two predecessors and became president of the association. In that role he took a special interest in the development of the clubs. With the help of Cora Morse, class of 1908, at least eight clubs were formed during his presidency. Henry Whittemore retired as principal of the school in 1917, but he continued as president of the association until his death in 1931. That loss of was felt deeply by the school and its alumnae. A new alumnae club for the Framingham area was formed shortly afterward, named the Henry Whittemore Club.

The 1930’s brought change to both the institution and the association. In 1932, the school became a full four-year college. Its last principal, Francis Bagnall, became its first president. Grace Bartlett, class of 1902, succeeded Mr. Whittemore as president of the association and served in that office until 1939, the college’s centennial year. The Alumnae Council began a transition from acting as an extension of the executive board to becoming a semi-annual conference where reports were presented and guest speakers were heard. The growing business responsibilities of the association were being handled by the association’s able secretary, Mary C. Moore, class of 1872 and advanced class of 1873. Miss Moore served as secretary from 1900 to 1939, and was also the association’s treasurer from 1916 to 1922. Her strong leadership began the evolution of the secretary’s role to what is today our Executive Secretary/Director of Alumni Affairs.

Mary Moore had taught at the Perkins School for the Blind before coming to teach English at Framingham for twenty-four years. In 1925, she wrote a timeless message to the graduating class in that year’s *Dial* yearbook: “I am glad of the opportunity to send you first a message of welcome to our Association then to urge every member of the Association to enter into the life and work of the Association in whole-hearted fashion... Our school holds a position of high dignity as a leader in the nation-wide movement for teachers. The loyalty of her Alumnae is a matter of remark among people outside our ranks.”

It has been written of Mary Moore’s service, “It would be impossible to record the many kindnesses shown by Miss Moore to the college, the alumnae association, and to individuals as students and graduates.” When the association was given its own room in May Hall at the end of Miss Moore’s tenure as secretary, it was named the Mary C.

Moore Alumnae Room.

Miss Moore was succeeded by Abbie H. McCartney, class of 1912 (secretary 1939-1963), who continued the tradition of executive leadership. By 1947 the workload of the alumnae secretary had become so heavy that the position of assistant secretary was created, first filled by Helen Swaine Flood, class of 1923. That position today has become our Administrative Assistant, now held by Marilyn Booth Manzella, class of 1969.

In the late 1940's, the spotlight of celebrity briefly shone on the presidency of the association. Ruth Graves Wakefield, class of 1924, became acting president from 1948 to 1949. Ruth Wakefield and her husband ran the Toll House Inn in Whitman, Massachusetts, where she invented the famous Toll House Cookie (a.k.a. the chocolate chip cookie) and wrote the best-selling cookbook, *Toll House Tried and True Recipes*. When the association instituted its Recognition Day Assemblies in 1954, Ruth Wakefield was among the first six alumnae to be recognized. Those assemblies eventually became the Recognition Program held every year on Alumni Day to honor fellow alumni for their outstanding achievements, their service to the college and to the association.

Also in 1954, the association changed its bylaws so that it would meet every year rather than biennially. According to President Martin O'Connor, the association's annual meeting for 1955 was the first time the new auditorium addition to Dwight Hall was used.

In 1961, O'Connor Hall was built as a dormitory and student union building. Three rooms on the second floor were set aside for the alumnae association. One room had a small kitchen area and was suitable for serving simple teas, another was a comfortably furnished sitting room, and the third was an office holding the extensive alumnae records. The office room was designated the Abbie H. McCartney Alumnae Office. After her retirement as secretary in 1963, a tribute to Abbie McCartney was written by Marion Harney, class of 1911. In it she wrote: "We know this to be true: no college in the land has had an alumnae secretary who has served more faithfully and efficiently than she. The accurate records which she has compiled which pertain to the school and to the Alumnae Association covering the past 125 years are a living monument to her and they will be so for all time... This we know – through her diligent service we have become a strong Association in the best meaning of the word."

The College celebrated its 125th anniversary in 1964. By that time Dr. D. Justin McCarthy had become its president. In a foreword to an alumnae publication on the history of the association published that year he wrote: "In the complexities of the present day as the college grows and changes to meet the needs of changing times, the influence of the alumnae becomes an increasingly important factor in preserving the spirit which has been nurtured at Framingham over the long years, a spirit that is so unique to this College. It is the unflagging interest of the alumnae and their untiring efforts on behalf of the College which have constantly provided and will continue to provide an endless source of inspiration to those at the College and to those who will be coming here in the future. May the proud accomplishments of the past guide the bright hopes of the future."

In part two of this article in the next *Echo*: “alumnae” become “alumni” after men are allowed on campus, the association finds a home of its own, and “the complexities of the present day” that Dr. McCarthy wrote about become ever more complex.