

Pomp, circumstance of graduations past

School graduations in Chelmsford have changed over the years in some ways and in others they are similar today to what they were nearly 100 years ago.

The most obvious change is in the size of the graduating classes. In 1893 there were three graduates from the High School in the Center while this year saw 502 diplomas handed out. (There were also probably 6-8 graduates from the High School in North Chelmsford in 1893.)

It was not until the fall of 1917 that the Center and North High Schools were combined. Graduations and other activities had been held entirely separate before then. So the class of 1918 was the first to receive their diplomas from "Chelmsford" High School. That year the policy of holding the graduation in the Center one year and in North Chelmsford the following was instigated and was continued until the 1930's or later.

While we take high school graduation as an annual event, it was not the case less than 100 years ago.

According to the *Lowell Weekly Journal* of June 29, 1888, June 22 of that year saw the first graduation in town since the days of Chelmsford Academy 60 or so years pre-

The way It was

By George A.
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the national flag was festooned along the front of the gallery, in the center of which appeared a fine group photograph of the members of the class."

The academic procession included all of the high school students as well as the 13 graduates. Each of the graduates read an essay, following which the chairman of the school committee, Mr. J.A. Bartlett, conferred the diplomas.

This writer recalls the 1923 graduation and the problem that arose.

Apparently, the custodian of the North Town Hall had varnished all of the wooden chairs a few days before the graduation on June 20th. Unfortunately, the weather had been hot and very humid and the varnish had not dried

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when the graduation was in the Center and vice versa. The graduates formed a receiving line and greeted friends and acquaintances. Then, at least in 1932, the line doubled back on itself so that each graduate could say goodbye to each of his, or her, classmates. Dancing was enjoyed the rest of the evening with refreshments served during intermission.

Starting in 1919, high school students were not the only ones to receive diplomas. The report of the School Committee that year included the following: "A new plan has been inaugurated this last year in granting diplomas to grammar school pupils. This has been done to create a new incentive to the grade pupils, to not only complete this first cycle of their training but also to seek higher laurels in the sphere of education."

For many years, two grade school graduations were held each year: one at the North Town Hall and one at the Center Hall. Students from the Princeton Street, Highland Avenue, and West Grammar Schools had a joint ceremony at North and those from the Center Grammar School, in the Center

tion and such activities as the annual Thanksgiving service. Bard has helped the leadership of the congregation take on "a Jewish role." In accordance with his belief that "the dance with his bell that the responsibility should not always be extended family of far held May 31, over 70 ment At a dinner in Bard's Harvard Medical School. department of psychiatry and clinical Medical School and studied at the UNIVERSITY of

The only bid received, from L. Russo Construction in Fitchburg, came in at \$778,000. Lynch estimated the town has between \$375,000 to \$400,000 left to spend. Project cuts have not been finalized, but those Lynch anticipated include:
 • 20 percent less dredging at boat ramp;
 • reduce parking spaces from 180 to 130;
 • drastic lighting cutback — (only more)