

Monroe High School Commencement in 1893

The sketch shown with this column caught my attention when I first saw it on Facebook. I thought it might be fun to see if I could find enough material in the paper to do a column about the graduation. It was the cover of a tri-fold program for the graduation exercises from Monroe High School in 1893. The horse and the clothes on the boy were painted with what appear to be pastel water colors. The inside listed the entire program for the evening.

The Monroe Sentinel reported on the following Wednesday that [the original] Turner Hall was crowded to its utmost capacity by “the people of this community who feel a lively interest in the welfare and achievements of our public schools, and especially those who are annually gratified and edified by being present at the high school graduating exercises.”

The report continued, “No commencement in the history of this institution, which ranks among the best of its class in the state, had elicited more interest; and no class of pupils had ever graduated with more credit for past achievements, or brighter hopes for usefulness.”

The large hall was beautifully decorated with flags, flowers, and pictures, which presented an effect that the hall was half audience room and half art gallery “with a sea of animation, expectancy, and genuine enjoyment depicted in the faces of the two thousand present.” The class motto chosen was “The end of knowledge is usefulness.”

The program started with the Remembrance Overture played by the orchestra at 8:00 p.m. followed with a prayer by Rev. I. F. Nuzum of the M. E. Church. Miss Osee Wagner delivered the salutatory address called, “Irish Schools and Scholars.” Each graduate of the 18-member class gave a similar type oration, except for Mary L. Barney who was to deliver, “An Old Problem.” The newspaper stated that this one was omitted “on account of her illness.” Grace Ball, member of the class, delivered a history of the class, which consisted of six males and 12 females.

In addition to the orations, there were also some musical pieces. Miss Laurene Gardner performed a vocal solo of “Take Me, Jamie Dear.” Mrs. Nettie Booth Wegg played a violin solo, and the orchestra played “Auf Der Alm.”

The last oration was the valedictory address, “Liberty and License,” which was delivered by John W. Raymer immediately before the presentation of diplomas by school board president A. C. Dodge and principal J. A. Mitchell. This was followed with another musical selection by the orchestra, possibly a recession. The newspaper article did not state what time the graduation was completed. There is a photo of Center School where these graduates attended all four years on the cover of the Monroe Area Pictorial History.

An article in the September 20 issue of the Monroe Sentinel stated that Amy Carey, Grace Schoenfield, Osee Wagner, Jennie Barber, Grace Ball, Carrie Ball, Elma Smock, Mary Wallace, and Rose Gapen, all 1893 graduates of the high school, had secured positions and were already teaching. It also stated that Monroe graduates who desired to teach had no trouble obtaining positions.

The first graduation from Monroe High School took place on March 24, 1871 after the winter term was completed. They had quite a last term as the Center School that they had been attending burned on January 19 of that year. The five graduates were Will Corson, Theo Hall, Sarah Willey, Mary Start, and Carrie Williams. At the time of graduation, each of them was enti-



This sketch is from the cover of the program for the commencement exercises of the twentieth graduating class of Monroe High School in 1893. It is from the collection of Hazel Matzke, of Juda, and was the inspiration for showing how different graduations were then.

tled to receive a first grade teaching certificate from Superintendent Morgan. The graduation program for this class was very similar to the one for the class of 1893, except that it appears that more of the younger high school students were involved in the program. The paper did not state where this graduation ceremony had taken place.

I remember that my brother, who graduated from Monroe High School in 1973, was in the 100th graduating class. For a reason unknown to me, there were no graduating classes from 1872 to 1874. It now makes sense that 1883 would have been the tenth graduating class and the class of 1973 was the 100th. That means that the class of 2023 will be the 150th graduating class of Monroe High School.

PROGRAM.	
Music—"Remembrance Overture,"	Dalby
ORCHESTRA.	
Prayer,	REV. I. F. NUZUM
Irish Schools and Scholars—Salutatory,	OSEE WAGNER
The Indian Question,	FRANK B. NOBLE
Education in Early New England,	ROSE GAPEN
An Old Problem,	MARY L. BARNEY
English Parliament,	MAE SCHADEL
Music—"Take Me, Jamie Dear,"	J. W. Bischoff
MISS LAURENE GARDNER.	
The Kindergarten,	JENNIE T. BARBER
Immigration,	WALTER C. MUSSEK
Folk Lore,	GRACE BALL
The Township Government,	AMY E. CAREY
Iron is "King,"	JULIUS WINDEN
Music—"Auf der Alm,"	—
ORCHESTRA.	
The Commonwealth,	CARRIE BALL
The Nicaragua Canal,	EDWARD BLUMER
The Old Northwest,	ELMA SMOCK
Marie Antoinette,	CLARA JACKSON
The Elimination of Evil,	MARY WALLACE
Music—Violin Solo,	Selected
MRS. NETTIE BOOTH WEGG.—'83.	
The Unearned Increment,	MAX G. BOOTH
Woman,	GRACE SCHOENFIELD
Class History,	GRACE BALL
Liberty and License—Valedictory,	JOHN RAYMER
Presentation of Diplomas,	{PRES. A. C. DODGE {PRIN. J. A. MITCHELL
Music,	ORCHESTRA

Graduation program
Monroe High School
Class of 1893.