

# IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## REFERENCE SERIES

### BOISE HIGH SCHOOL COMMENCEMENTS (Advertiser Column By Judith Austin)

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High school commencements are always occasions for great community pride and celebration. Those we attend today seem very ceremonial, but they--and newspaper descriptions of them--are simple compared with the events eighty or ninety years ago. In those days, even examinations were public occasions at which any citizen could listen to pupils answer questions in class and could read the papers they wrote--which were kept in the principal's office for all to see. The commencement described below took place in 1886 and was the fourth held for the Boise High School. One picture in the Idaho State Historical Society's Collection shows the student body of all twelve grades in the school, with J. W. Daniels, principal, in the left foreground--looking like the stern disciplinarian he was said to be.

Commencement day in the Boise City High School was this year an occasion of much more than ordinary interest. Not that the occasion was very much different from former similar occasions, but the interest on the part of the people of Boise seems to increase with each recurring year.

The large hall of the public school building was handsomely decorated with flags, mottoes in handsome designs, wreaths and flowers. The decorations were the work of Prof. Daniels assisted by the class of '86 and the other scholars in the schools, and it was the general expression that the effect was not only handsome but surpassing in beauty and designs all former occasions of like nature.

The exercise commenced at 8 o'clock, but long before that hour the friends of the school and others began to arrive and by a quarter to eight the large hall was filled, and many coming later were unable to secure seats and aisles and outer halls were filled with standing spectators. But so intense was the interest that standing room was at a premium.

To say that the exercises were a decided success and highly commendable and fully appreciated by the vast audience present, is only stating a fact. The graduating class not only did well, but the young ladies and gentlemen did exceedingly well, and they surpassed even the fondest expectations of their friends and the audience. Whatever

anxieties Prof. Daniels may have felt as to the success of the evening's exercises all fears and anxieties were dispelled as the programme proceeded and a happy smile stole over his face and the close observer could not help but notice the inward satisfaction enjoyed by the Professor in the fact that his labor for the year was so impressed upon the class of '86 as to show itself in the well written and spoken efforts of each graduate. Happy, indeed, must be the teacher who realized and knows his labors have been fruitful and not in vain.

The program included not only original addresses by students but also declamations of poetry and prose, as well as musical selections by both community members and graduates. The major address was delivered by Territorial Superintendent of Public Instruction S. W. Moody and was reprinted in full by the newspaper.

Some idea of the decorations which graced the hall can be gotten from a photograph in the Idaho State Historical Society's Collection which shows a similar occasion at Cole School--which went through the eighth grade and was then outside the city--about the turn of the century. The teacher, on the right, is Cynthia Mann, previously a teacher in the Boise public school and later a founder of the children's Home; the young man seated second from the left is George H. Curtis, who became a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford University, an Idaho state senator, and Secretary of State of Idaho.