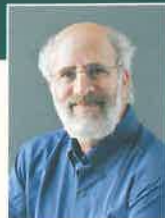
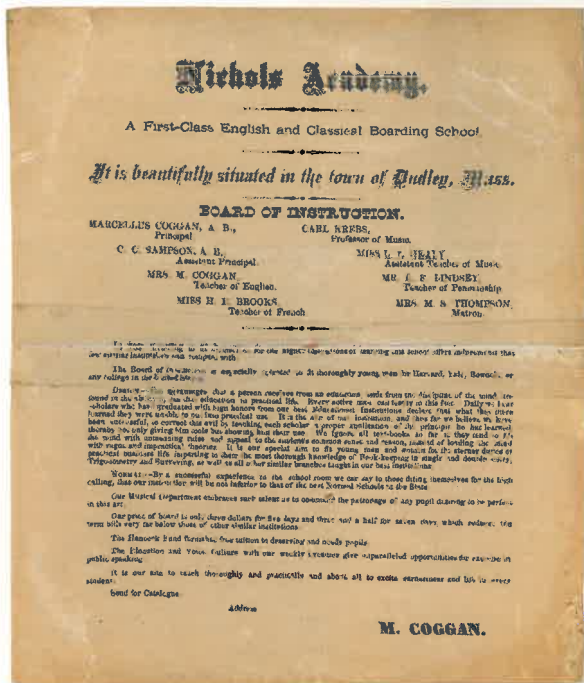


## From the Archives

# "The more things change..."



Contributed by  
Jim Douglas



Note: Nichols College is fortunate to have a rather extensive archive of material relating to the history of the College and its predecessors on the Hill going back to the founding of Nichols Academy in 1815. In this ongoing column, Jim Douglas, director of the library and curator of the archives, will share something from the collection that illuminates a part of our long and proud history.

Sound familiar? It should. While business education on the Hill has moved far beyond "Book-keeping in single and double-entry," more than a century later

Before there was a Nichols College, there was a Nichols College of Business Administration, a Nichols Junior College, and a Nichols Academy. Over a hundred years ago, Nichols Academy was both a high school for the town of Dudley and a private preparatory school. In the mid-1870s the Academy consisted of a classroom building and a boarding house and was on the brink of entering a new era of building construction and revamping under the leadership of a new Trustee and major benefactor, Hezekiah Conant.

In an advertisement for the Academy, circa 1873-76, the stated mission was to "fit thoroughly young men for Harvard, Yale, Bowdoin, or any college in the United States," but it also had a "special aim to fit young men and women for the sterner duties of practical business life imparting to them the most thorough knowledge of Book-keeping in single and double entry..." For pedagogy, "We ignore all text-books so far as they tend to fill the mind with unmeaning rules and [we] appeal to the student's common sense and reason, instead of loading the mind with vague and impractical theories." *Practical* was clearly an important consideration as the word appears four times (and *impractical* is clearly a disparaging word).

Nichols is still committed to a "career-focused business and professional education" and use of case studies and emphasis on practical, experiential learning.

By the way, modern day readers of the early advertisements are often bemused at the cost of services and products. Our advertisement shows board each week to be "\$3.00 for 5 days and \$3.50 for seven." For a 12-week term, tuition, room and board could be about \$52.00. (And there were optional extras, such as book-keeping which in 1878 cost \$2.00.) Sounds like a deal by today's standards, doesn't it? Until you learn that annual earnings for workers (farm and non-farm combined) in 1876 was about \$403. So the cost, particularly if more than one daughter or son was attending at the same term or more than one term, was by no means insignificant.

And, oh yes, the location hasn't changed. The Nichols Academy *Catalogue* for 1878-79 put it this way: "The Academy is beautifully situated upon Dudley Hill, one of the most delightful spots in New England... The student is here free from the temptations that surround him in larger and less quiet places. No place in all New England is better known for purity of air and water, salubrity of climate, and beauty of scenery."