

WORCESTER HISTORICAL MUSEUM

30 Elm Street
Worcester, Massachusetts

ARCHIVES

Oread Collegiate Institute
Collection

2000.17

Processed by William F. Carroll, C.A.
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Collection Information

Abstract : Oread Collegiate Institute was established in Worcester in 1849 by Eli Thayer, and was the first college for women in the United States. The school closed in 1881, and the buildings used by other educational organizations until around 1932. The building, designed and built as a replica of a feudal castle, was demolished in 1934.

Finding Aid : Finding Aid in print form is available in the Repository.

Preferred Citation : Worcester Historical Museum, Worcester, Massachusetts.

Provenance : Gift of Gordon J. Bedard, Worcester, Mass., March 30, 2000.

MARC Access : Collection is cataloged in MARC under the following subject headings (lcsh, aat, tgm, gmgcp)

Thayer, Eli, 1819-1899.
Brown, John, 1800-1859.
Oread Collegiate Institute (Worcester, Mass.)
Women – Education – 19th century.
Women's colleges – Massachusetts – Worcester.
Abolitionists – Massachusetts – Worcester.
Engraving. (lcsh)

Historical/Biographical Notes

Eli Thayer, a Worcester educator and businessman, planned and built a replica of a medieval feudal castle on the top of goat Hill in Worcester. The building was planned to be a liberal arts college for women, believed to be the first college in the country solely for women, with a curriculum modeled after that of Brown University, Thayer's alma mater. The building was planned to be in the form of a hollow square. The north and south towers and main hall were completed in 1852, but the remainder of the proposed construction was not started.

Thayer was an ardent abolitionist, and is credited with populating Kansas with anti-slavery settlers from Worcester and other eastern cities during the 1850s. Thayer also entertained John Brown in 1857, and provided arms to Brown which were used in the attack on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry.

The Oread Collegiate Institute opened for classes in May, 1849 with 14 students. The peak years for the college seem to have been during the 1860s and 1870s, with an average of about 140 students. The opening of new women's colleges – Smith, Vassar, Wellesley – drew many students away from Worcester, and the college closed in 1882.

Subsequently the building was used as a domestic science school from 1898 to 1904, and later as a riding school from around 1910 to 1932. The property fell into disrepair, and was demolished in 1934. The land has since become a children's playground.

Scope and Content

The collection consists of an engraving of Oread Institute, ca. 1870; and a newspaper article, 1987, inspired by the finding of the engraving in an attic, detailing the history of the building and biographical information of Eli Thayer, founder of the Institute.

Series Description

Series 1: Prints.

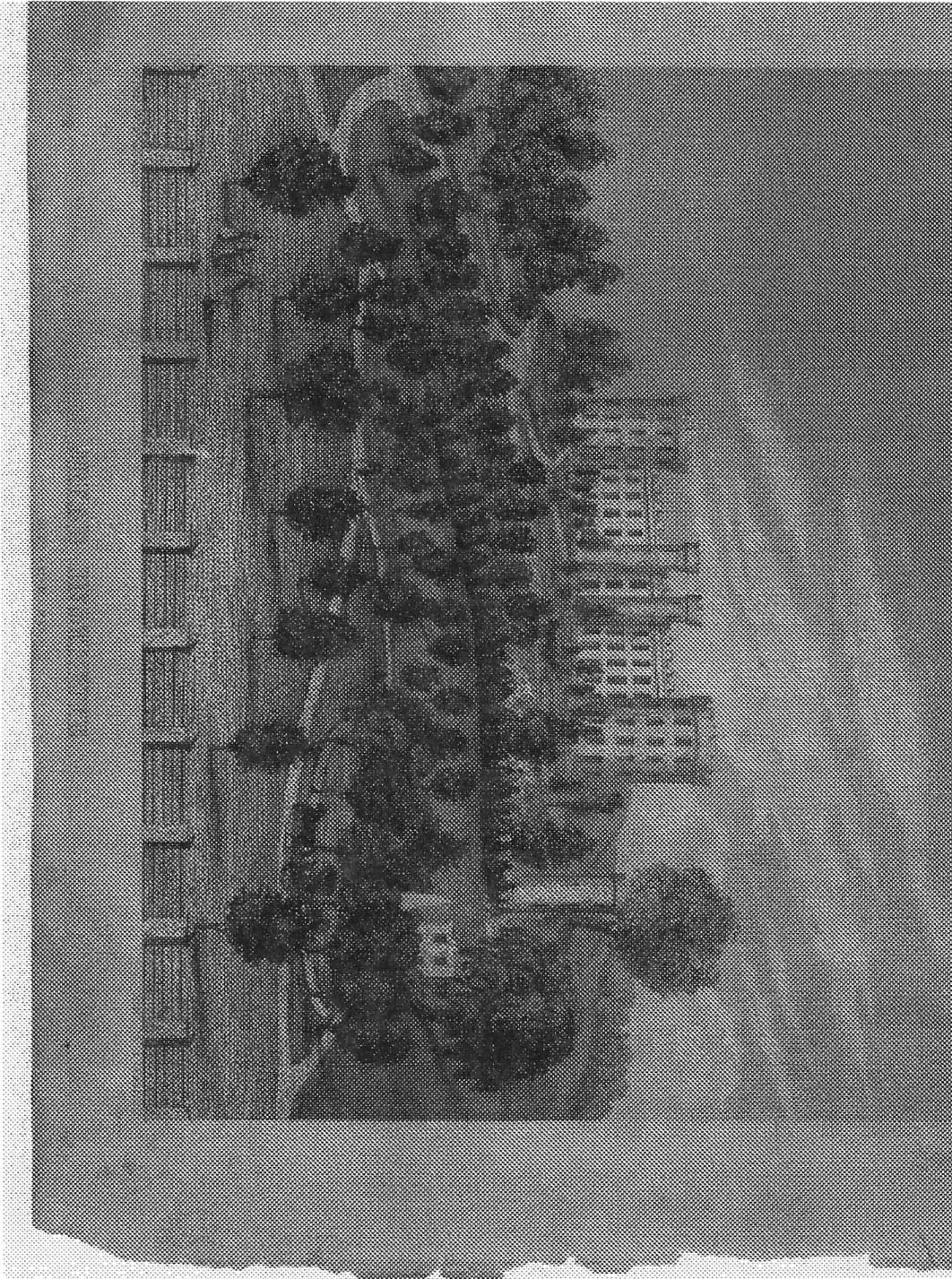
Series 2: Clippings.

Oread Collegiate Institute Collection
2000.17
Series 1, Prints

<u>Box #</u>	<u>Folder #</u>	<u>Accession #</u>	<u>Description</u>
1		2000.17.1.1	Engraving of Oread Institute : 9 x 12 in. / drawn by Woodward, eng'd by J. Gimbrede, ca. 1870.

Oread Collegiate Institute Collection
2000.17
Series 2, Clippings

<u>Box #</u>	<u>Folder #</u>	<u>Accession #</u>	<u>Description</u>
2		2000.17.2.1	<i>Once upon a time Worcester had a castle / Susanna Seymour, in, Worcester Sunday Telegram, January 4, 1987.</i>
		.1a	Aqp.



2000.17.1.1 Oread Collegiate Institute.