

Famed Alumnus Returns To Honor School

Hundreds of Woodward graduates have achieved prominence and fame, but the most distinguished graduate is William Howard Taft who entered Woodward High School in 1870 and was graduated with the Class of '74. He wrote of his school days: "Four years of the best mental discipline of my life were spent in Woodward High School, and I shall always be grateful for the opportunities there afforded me. Mr. Woodward erected a monument more enduring than brass. His name will remain a household word so long as there is a City of Cincinnati. I am proud to be an Alumnus of Woodward."

He frequently acknowledged at home and abroad, what many others of us have found to be true, that his four years at Woodward gave him the most solid and lasting foundation for his great life work. He spent his four years of college at Yale, graduating second in a class of 121. He was class orator and salutatorian. Returning to his home city he entered the Cincinnati Law School and two years later, in 1880 finished this course.

From this time until his death, his life was a well-respected record of service—service to his fellowmen, service to his country, and service to countries beyond the seas. As executive of the Philippines, Secretary of War, and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Taft used his talents.

On November 3, 1908, Mr. Taft was elected President of the United States, and on the following day he was the speaker at the laying of the corner stone of the "New Woodward," the building which was completed in 1910. He said:

"Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen: I have been talking for forty days continuously, as you may well know from my voice. The strain has been considerable,



and nothing could induce me to make another speech, after the four hundred I have already made, but the sense of obligation that I owe to Woodward High School for the thoroughness of

the education that I received at her hands; a debt of gratitude I am only too glad always to acknowledge. I was one of five brothers who owe their education to old Woodward, and I should be lacking, indeed, if I had any throat at all, in proper spirit not to come here and testify to the affection I bear to the school.

"This is not an occasion directly relevant to the memory of William Woodward. It is a progressive step in the educational institution which he established, and it is fitting, therefore, that we should call to mind the debt the community owed to him and the example which he set of a good and generous citizenship to all those who have come after and to all those who feel pride in their city of Cincinnati. It is proper, it is appropriate, that whenever a change takes place, whenever there comes anything into the life of Woodward High School calling for commemoration we should renew the statement of the debt we owe to William Woodward for what he did in the early days of Cincinnati for the cause of its education.

"Now, Woodward High School in my day was the most thorough training school in the country. Whether it has changed or not I know not, but a boy or girl could get an education that would last him or her a lifetime and make him or her a respected member of the community always. The foundation laid in mathematics



WILLIAM HOWARD TAFT

under the thoroughness of the training in Woodward has given impetus to the logical workings of many a brain that has pressed itself forward to success in professional and business lines.

"My friends, I thank you for the opportunity of appearing before you and testifying, in so far as I may, to the real, sincere and deep sense of obligation that I feel to William Woodward, who made it possible for us to have Woodward High School, and to the conscientious men and women who made up the faculty of that school and laid the basis of the education of so many of Cincinnati's youth, and who builded up

their character as men and women to serve well the community in which they live. I thank you."

On the night of the Alumna Association reunion, March 8, 1930, word was received that William Howard Taft had passed away, just a month after illness had forced him to resign as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States. It seems more than a mere coincidence that his passing should have occurred on the one hundred and sixty-second anniversary of the birth of William Woodward, the founder of the school which Mr. Taft so proudly claimed as his Alma Mater.