

## Worcester City Hall and Common

*Designed by Peabody & Stearns of Boston and built in 1898 by the Norcross Company, a local firm, the present City Hall replaced the town hall, built on the same site in 1825. But in the days before the town hall existed, Worcester citizens conducted community business in “Old South” Church (1763). It was there that town meetings, annual elections, and any business requiring citizen participation were held. The church stood on the common next to the site chosen for the town hall.*

*In 1894, forty-six years after becoming a city, Worcester was authorized by the state legislature to borrow \$300,000 to build the present City Hall. The four-story building was constructed with grey Milford granite, and has a central tower rising 205 feet above the street. The interior, decorated in marble, oak and mahogany, boasts a grand staircase that goes from ground floor to the third floor. Marble stairs, ornate cast iron balusters, and a mahogany hand rail contribute to the elegance of this remarkable architectural feature.*

*City Hall stands on Worcester Common, land set aside in 1669 for militia training, burials, and live-stock grazing. Over the years, the original parcel of twenty acres has been reduced to five. The tracks that were laid across the Common in the early days of flourishing railroad transportation were removed in the 1870s.*

### Hot-so-Common knowledge...

*The Common we know today is very different in appearance and in use from what it was in the past. The following excerpts are taken from the Proceedings of the Worcester Society of Antiquity (now Worcester Historical Museum) for the Year 1884:*

*“About 1840...two streets ran diagonally across it ( the Common)...Near the site of the Bigelow Monument, and fronting west, was the gun house for the keeping of the cannon belonging to the town; also the hearse house, and hook and ladder company's quarters...The burial ground, situated at the east end of the Common, surrounded by a low stone wall, had an entrance on the west end...This old ground was given up for burial purposes many years ago, and those grave stones which were not removed were laid flat and covered with earth...On the southeast corner...there stood for many years a one-story wooden school house...It was here (on the Common) that the county cattle shows were held. Four rows of pens for the exhibition of cattle, swine and sheep, were put on the north side, near Front Street...On Fast days it was the custom to have games of round ball on the Common, which attracted crowds of spectators...much more exciting than our modern baseball. Football and cricket, too, were often played here.”*

*The man immortalized by the monument that stood at the immediate left of City Hall since 1908 is the Senator George Frisbie Hoar. His statue, by Daniel Chester French, was paid for by voluntary contributions from more than 30,000 of his admirers. Hoar, whose Worcester home was on Oak Avenue, had been their congressman from 1869 to 1877 and their senator from 1877 to 1904. Throughout his career, he was a passionate abolitionist and advocate of women's rights.*

-Information collected from the Worcester Historical Museum-

