

Flipping Through the Pages of Time

Tahanto Stags

By Chloe Nehme

Do you still have your old high school yearbooks? Throughout history, yearbooks have been a timeless piece of American School culture, being the one remnant most commonly associated with reminiscing our academic past. Through them, we can witness how much not just the people have changed, but also the world as we know it. As the school year wraps up, school yearbook clubs all over the country are putting the final touches on their own yearbooks, so a look into the past of our own school is warranted. Today's Fascinating Find focuses on just that—the Boylston Historical Society's Tahanto Regional Middle/High School Yearbook collection

The first example of a yearbook prototype dates back to between 41 to 51 A.D., during the Roman rule of Greece. A marble tablet from the time showcases the graduating class of that year—a group of around 30 Athenian men. That high school reunion seems long overdue...¹

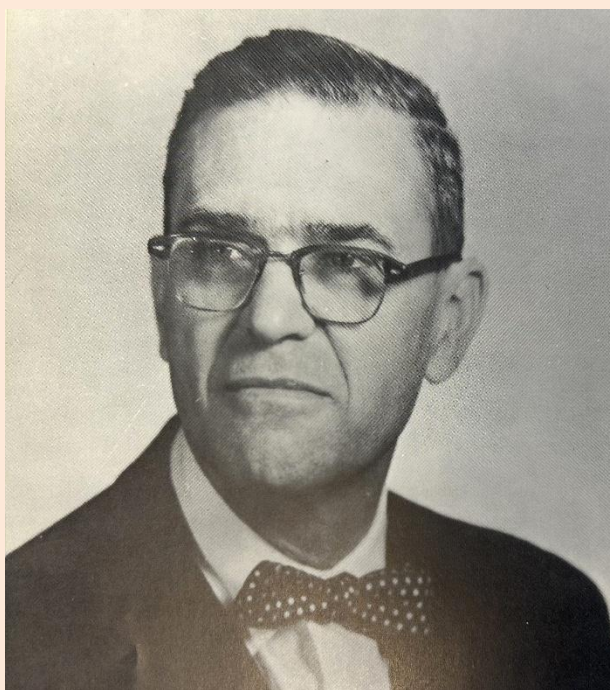
By the 17th century, the first yearbooks of the United States of America were scrapbooks in the East Coast. Inspired by a practice dating back to the Renaissance, students were encouraged to sign each other's scrapbooks containing physical embodiments of school year memories—hair clippings and dried flowers to name a few.² The first yearbook as one would come to call it today was published in 1806 by Yale College. A combined effort between student and faculty, this yearbook was titled “*Profiles of Parts of the Class graduated at Yale College.*” Because the first photograph would not be taken until 1826, silhouettes of the students were used instead! It was not until the 1860s when New Hampshire born George Kendall Warren popularized the daguerreotype that photographs began to appear in yearbooks.³ By the 20th century, yearbooks quickly became a combined effort between staff and students to create a wholly unique collection showcasing their yearly accomplishments, friendships, and academics.

One of these schools would end up being our very own Tahanto Regional High School. Opened in 1962, Tahanto itself was conceptualized in 1958 due to concerns over Boylston students going to neighboring districts for high school education. A Building Committee was recommended to investigate the potential for a new high school. At the Town Meeting of 9 March, 1959, the townspeople of Boylston authorized that a committee of seven members was to be formed; with 1,000 dollars to be raised for its use.⁴ In a town vote 227 to 6, at the town meeting on 16 November 1959, Boylston and Berlin voted to combine their students into the Boylston-Berlin Regional District.⁵

*“In 1960, the Committee, composed of John Coyle, Richard Sullivan, Jr., and William Chase, Jr., selected the architectural firm of Karslund, LeNormand, & Quann, Inc. to draw up plans for the new high school. The following year, the town appropriated \$1,593,000.00 to pay for the construction of the facility, which opened for classes in 1962”.*⁶

The Regional High School was named in honor of George Tahanto, a Native American sagamore (chief), for monies paid to his uncle, the previous sagamore of the Nashaway people, for the 1701 sale of land on which the school now stands.⁷ In 1962, Mr. Charles Prescott Sawyer was hired as a full-time principal.⁸

The school opened its doors in Fall of 1962 to 361 students from both towns.⁹ This first school year brought with it the Tahanto yearbook of 1962-63.



CHARLES PRESCOTT SAWYER
First Principal of Tahanto Regional High School
1962

Yearbooks are the unspoken heroes of cultural preservation.

As we follow them throughout the years, we can note the changes in values and historical events that shaped how the youth of the time formatted the book that would document their high school life. The yearbook for 1962-63 contains an opening spread of national events that occurred during the year, including Lt. Col. John H. Glenn's orbit around Earth, the widespread use of the Polio vaccine, and the win of the New York Yankees. Blueprints of the new school are showcased, portraying the beginnings of the Regional School. The showcase of national events continues until the yearbook of 1968—exhibiting the multitude of events that took place in the 1960s. Beginning from 1970, the yearbooks would take on very abstract designs and graphics. The book from 1969-1970 features a striking black cover and a multitude of quotes;

“I claim not to have controlled events, but confess plainly that events have controlled me.”

- Abraham Lincoln

¹ A marble slab in storage turned out to be an ancient Greek yearbook: NPR

² Why Do People Sign Yearbooks?

³ Artifact of the Month

⁴ Annual Report of the Officers of the Town of Boylston for the year ending December 31st, 1958, Town of Boylston, Town Reports, Boylston Historical Society and Museum, Inc.

⁵ Annual Report of the Officers of the Town of Boylston for the year ending December 31st, 1959, Town of Boylston, Town Reports, Boylston Historical Society and Museum, Inc.

⁶ Filgate, Bruce (2012) Boylston Historical Series, Boylston Historical Society and Museum, Inc.

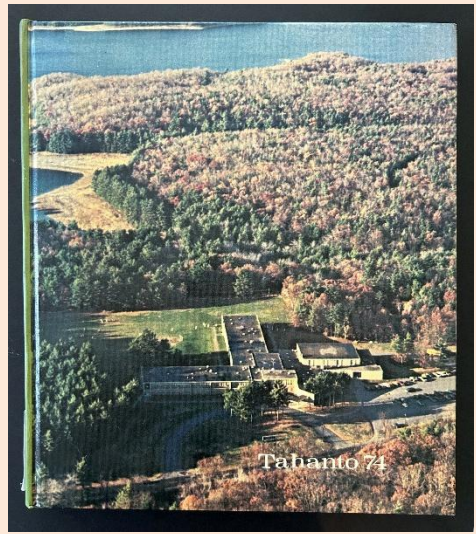
⁷ Dupuis, William (1986) Lives Thus Spent, Boylston Historical Society and Museum, Inc.

⁸ <https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/bostonglobe/name/charles-sawyer-obituary?id=26645223>

⁹ Filgate, Bruce (2012) Boylston Historical Series, Vol. XIII, Dupuis, Boylston Historical Society and Museum, Inc.

A Pop of Color and Student Artwork

Before even beginning with the photographs and information characteristic of yearbooks, we are greeted with student artwork.¹⁰ The book of 1974 features the first colored photograph to be shown in a Tahanto Yearbook—the cover portrays an aerial view of the school first built in 1962. This serves as a piece of history; the original school was replaced in 2013 with a new one for Tahanto Regional Middle and High School.¹¹ The books from the 1980s feature incredibly unique and colorful designs. The yearbook from 1988 showcases a photograph of the graduating class of that year on the cover, with mullets and perms galore.



1974 TAHANTO YEARBOOK
With Color Photography
BHSM Fuller Library Collection



TAHANTO YEARBOOKS
Early Years
Boylston Historical Society Fuller Library Collections

Shift to Memories

The yearbook of 2025 is vastly different from the one of 1963. The focus shifted from the book itself to the memories it contains. Yearbooks of the 21st century now contain superlative titles and candid photographs. Interestingly enough, the yearbook of 2020-21 has little mention of COVID-19, something that would have definitely been mentioned by the people of the 1960s. On the back cover of the 2025 book, student artwork is shown, reminiscent of the showcase from the 1970 yearbook.



Tahanto Yearbooks
1962 to 2025
Boylston Historical Society Fuller Library Collections

The Digital Age

Yearbooks stand as a nostalgic look into the past. Year by year and little by little, culture changes and is documented in a student's high school years, the transformative period in our youth's life. Now more than ever, the gems demonstrate the importance of physical records and books, in a world where everything can seem to be ephemeral.

¹⁰ Tahanto Yearbook, 1970, Boylston Historical Society and Museum, Inc.

¹¹ New \$32.2M Tahanto Regional Middle/High School opens for classes Jan 3, Worcester Gazette Editor, Nancy Filgate, Curator, Boylston Historical Society and Museum, Inc.