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Compiled and Narrated
by
Mattie Kilborn Webster for
The Two Hundredth Anniversary
of the
Town of Merrimack NH

EPISODE 13 - Presented by Headmaster Charles Warner and Students

MCGAW NORMAL INSTITUTE

1849 - In 1849 Merrimack New Hampshire took its place in history again by founding the 9th Normal School in the United States for the professional training of teachers. Prof. William Russell, a graduate of Glasgow University Scotland, was interested in furthering the cause of education by training teachers in a well-integrated program.

He came to Merrimack and found there men of vision and power, who were willing to support him in his venture. Prof. Russell opened the school with 65 students the first term, and it prospered well until 1865 when it was turned over to Rev. S. N. Howells to be run as a Military Academy as such schools were thought to be popular after the War. Rev. Howells only held his lease for seven years, at the end of which time there remained but one student.

The picture looked dark indeed for the well-intentioned endeavor of Dr. Russell, Robert McGaw its main benefactor, and others. However in 1872 Robert McGaw died. He had been one of its firmest supporters. His will provided that a sum of \$10,000 be left with the following provisions:

1. That the name should be changed to McGaw Normal Institute implying that the character of the School should be restored as near as possible to what it was when started by Dr. Russell.
2. That in case the work of the school should be interrupted for two years the endowment should go to Dartmouth College.

He had intended that the people of Merrimack should have a good School and they should share in the responsibility of maintaining it.

McGaw has always had the reputation for maintaining high standards -- many of its graduates going to the best colleges in the land. On at least one occasion in recent years McGaw has had the honor of having its undergraduates at the State University rank higher than graduates of any other High School.

A partial list of McGaw graduates does little more than hint at the influence this school in our Nation's history. Walter Kittredge, author of "Tenting Tonight" and other songs; John Swett for many years Commissioner of Education in California; Mark Bailey, Prof. Of Speech at Yale; Rev. John Lane, famous preacher of western Massachusetts; Col. Edward C. Rose, Commanding Officer at Camp Blanding, World War II; Harry Parker, World War II flying ace; as well as many others which as yet have not reached the heights of fame to which they will climb.