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

EPISODE 14 - Presented by Thornton Grange #31

CIVIL WAR - WALTER KITTREDGE

1861 - 1865 When the Civil War opened, Merrimack had 115 men able to do military duty. Of this number 83 volunteered and 25 furnished substitutes; 9 substitutes were bought by the Town and 7 re-enlisted making the Town credited with 7 more than for which she was liable.

William T. Parker was military agent through the entire war, serving with ceaseless energy, always without pay. Of those going to War, 6 died or were killed in service. Those giving their lives were Horace B. Corning, Courtland Follansbee (died in Libby Prison), Edward Downs, George B. Longa, Rufus Merriam, and Henry Patrick.

The family giving the greatest number was the Longa Family. They gave 6. They were a fine old Hessian Family coming to this Town around the time of the Revolutionary War.

After the wild tumultuous rampaging war years, the soldiers came back to this "Old Town" and its stony farms in an effort to make a living. When some of us older ones were younger, we did not make as much of Holidays as they do today. We had Christmas and Thanksgiving, of course, and a mild celebration on the "Fourth," but we never forgot "Decoration Day."

One of my keenest and greenest memories is of the long parade from the Town Hall to the Burying Ground headed by "The Grand Army" as it marched to the cemetery to decorate the graves of its soldier dead. It is good to remember them, in their old faded blue uniforms, with their army hats - trimmed with gilt cord tied in a knot in front, as they came swinging down the line while the flags waves and the band played. They were followed by the long processions of school children laden with wreaths and flowers to decorate the graves.

"Tenting Tonight On the Old Camp Ground" is a product of the soul stirring times of the Civic War period. The author of this song, written in the fire of his early manhood, wrote several others. Today, they may be forgotten. It is enough, however, that this genial, tender-spirited man gave to us, and to our children, that beautiful song; which was destined to be enshrined in the hearts of all men.

It was enough to have written "Tenting" as he loved to call it; for none ranks higher or will live longer. Written under the mystical spell of the twilight hours, while deep in meditation on the sorrows and miseries of the times. The fingers of this gentle patient soul, wandered idly over the keys of his melodion, finding here and there a tender note or chord. In this manner the

melody of this beautiful song came to be written. To save the copyright he in later life wrote another verse and while it may not have the appeal of the earlier stanzas, the song is incomplete without it.

The War is over on the Old Camp Ground
After the flight of years;
The grass is warning o'er the mound
Where our "dear ones" dropped their tears.
Our flags wave serene, over the green
After the tramp of years.