

## **Philanthropy at NMU to 1959**

### **Dr. Russell M. Magnaghi**

Philanthropy is the desire to promote the welfare of others, expressed especially by the generous donations and money to a good cause. From its inception, Northern has benefited from the contributions of a variety of philanthropists who have aided the school's mission.

Northern was created on April 28, 1899 when Governor Hazen Pingree signed the bill establishing Northern State Normal School. In response, the city of Marquette offered funds and the use of the city hall, where the first classes were conducted beginning in September. In 1900, U.P. landowners John and Mary Longyear and their friends Frederick and Ellen Ayer provided 20 acres of land for the first campus, which today is worth at least several million dollars. The following year, Longyear and Ayer erected and furnished a dormitory with a view of reducing the living expenses of students. It remained their property until 1918.

Musically inclined Mary Longyear donated money for a Chickering grand piano purchased from the manufacturer expressly for the school. When she heard that the state had not provided funds for a music teacher, she created the first professorship for Sophia Linton who started the successful music program that is with us today. She also gave Northern a valuable set of art portfolios. Peter White, Marquette pioneer, who fought for a normal school in the Upper Peninsula beginning in 1875, anonymously donated \$1,000 (2024 value: over \$36,318) annually and through this fund Northern came into ownership of a fine collection of framed pictures that were reproductions of art classics. Several excellent pieces of statuary were purchased and these included a Venus di Milo and other Greco-Roman statues that were scattered around the campus.

Several publishing firms and private individuals enriched the budding library with gifts of books and periodicals. Mr. Longyear by the summer of 1901 donated \$1,500 for this purchase as

well. A group of Marquette businessmen donated funds for 2,000 books from the Moses Coit Tyler rare book collection to be added to the library.

Banker and businessman, N. M. Kaufman in 1908 established an annual prize of fifty dollars (2024 value: \$1,698) for the top two best student orators: \$30 (\$1,018) for first prize and \$20 (\$679) for second prize. In 1924, Mr. and Mrs. Carroll Paul of Marquette gave a microscope and a two-eye piece, 80-millimeter telescope, which was “heartily appreciated” by the school. Mrs. Helen Paul was the daughter of John Longyear and in 1949 she donated a wilderness area to the college, which we still have.

Student groups and individual classes gave artifacts and monies. The 1907 class donated the statue of Donatello’s St. George and the Dragon while the 1916 class donated a statue of Abraham Lincoln. Both are in the Beaumier Heritage Center. In the middle of the Great Depression, the class of 1932 gave an elaborate gateway that was once located at the northeast corner of campus directly across Presque Isle Avenue from Subway Sandwiches. The 1935 class donated \$500 for a new scoreboard for the gym. While another class gave money for an unrealized student union.

Mary Moore in 1918 provided \$1,000 that allowed needy female students to borrow from and there was the DAR Bartlett King Memorial fund for men. On April 14, 1924 the students of the Yggdrasil Literary Society voted to give \$25 (2024 value: \$913) to each of these groups while at the same time President Munson donated \$100 (\$1,785) for music stands for the Music Department, and the Marquette Music Club donated \$350 for a variety of instruments.

This presentation ends in 1959 highlighting with what President Edgar Harden called “the largest donation given to the college” 60 years after its creation by former English faculty member, department head and noted folklorist, James C. Bowman. He donated \$20,000 in bonds, which would be valued at close to \$250,000 today for scholarships. My story ends but Northern Michigan University continues to benefit from philanthropy.