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Biographical History

State University of New York at Cortland

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DR. HARRY DEWITT DE GROAT, 1873-1959

THIRD PRINCIPAL OF THE SCHOOL (1912-1942)

Dr. DeGroat received his A.B. degree from Williams College in 1894. After a year in the Howe School at Lima, Indiana, he went to Gouverneur, serving as vice-principal of the High School and teacher of mathematics for four and one half years. For the following four years he was Superintendent of Schools. In 1904 he became inspector of schools to Greater New York and Long Island. In 1909, Dr. DeGroat was appointed to a position in the examining division of the State Education Department, which he held until coming to Cortland in 1912.

Dr. DeGroat's administration of thirty years was responsible for many rich and valuable contributions to the school.

He had a real sense of the value of traditions in unifying the school. Among his innovations were illumination night, honor day, moving-up day, a school song, and his recognition of the real worth of an individual as evidenced by his "principal's appointment".

Dr. DeGroat brought to the school its first physician, Dr. Roxie A. Weber, who initiated a most efficient service.

Courses of study from two to three and finally to four years were enlarged and enriched, Cortland becoming the first normal school to train teachers of physical education in New York State, (this developed from the emergency training of a few outstanding students to introduce physical education into area schools to meet the newly enacted state requirements, to a four-year major in physical education); various student groups because of their high standards and accomplishments became affiliated with national organizations; students were allowed to enjoy dancing and other recreational activities, while the sororities and fraternities took on more the nature of social groups as each acquired a house for its members; the alumni became more and more active as evidenced by the organization of alumni clubs in various areas of the state; the fire which destroyed the school building on the original site resulted in the million dollar new one on the hill and the acquisition of athletic and play fields; and finally the Cortland Pledge which was taken at Commencement each year by all graduates from the professional courses.

To Dr. DeGroat goes the major share of the responsibility for these accomplishments (not the fire).

"A wise and understanding leader under whose competent command the forces of C.S.T.C. have marched on to reach even higher goals--an able general whose friendly and sympathetic guidance has inspired us all--an executive who, after thirty-one years of devoted service, has merited from all of his subordinates loyalty--esteem--and affection." A tribute from his students, Didascalion 1942.