



## William Mercer Fund

1902



### Purpose:

Support for Higher Education

### History:

Up until the late nineteenth century, the Town of Cornish provided no means for students to pursue secondary education. This situation was rectified by a gift from William W. Mercer in 1895. The provisions of Mr. Mercer's will left a sum of nearly \$7000 to the Town devoted to the aid of worthy students who desired an academic or high school education.<sup>1</sup> The town voted to accept the gift in the 1896 Town meeting and the Mercer Trust fund was established in 1902.

William W. Mercer (1843-1895) was born in Weathersfield, Vermont the son of Walter (d. 1845) and Susan (Cady) Mercer. His father came to Cornish around 1830 and built the mill on Blow-Me-Down Brook. William Mercer owned the original Huggins place including the mill property, which he transferred to Charles Beaman in 1884, who in turn sold the woolen mill portion and land to the New York City artist Thomas W. Dewing and the 51 adjoining acres on the other side of the Blow-Me-Down Brook to the sculptor Augustus and his wife Augusta Saint-Gaudens. This property is now the site of the Saint-Gaudens National Historic Park.

In 1876, William Mercer was made Collector of Internal Revenue succeeding Chester Pike and after the sale of their properties lived out their lives in Windsor, Vermont. William Mercer never married and is buried in the Chase Cemetery in Cornish. His memory was recalled in the naming of a shingle-covered bridge, designed and built for the Town by James Tasker on what was then the County Road over the Blow-Me-Down Brook (now Platt Road). The Mercer Bridge failed during a storm in 1935 and was replaced by a modern concrete and stone bridge with handsome stone walls designed by Charles Platt & Sons, architects of New York City; who were also the adjoining land owners.

John Dryfhout, 2019

<sup>1</sup> History of the Town of Cornish, New Hampshire, with genealogical record, 1763-1910, William Child, 1911