

Henry McCormick (1837-1918)

Henry McCormick was born on February 5, 1837, in Belmullet, County Mayo, Ireland. He grew up on his family's farm and attended the local grammar school. During his childhood, he lived through the Great Potato Famine, which severely affected Ireland. The famine caused many people to suffer, with some dying from disease, and many others moved away, including his father. Around 1850, his father left for America in search of a better life. And in 1853, Henry joined him at the age of 16. His mother sold a cow to raise money for his trip. When Henry arrived in the U.S., he had no money left because he had given his last coin to a mother with children on the ship. He first went to Virginia, but sadly, his father had died just before he arrived.

After spending a year in Virginia, Henry moved west, working on farms, eventually reaching the border of Illinois and Wisconsin. There, he worked in the summers and taught school during the winters. In 1859, he began teaching full-time in Boone County, Illinois. In 1859, he married Numanthia B. Kinyon, and they had five children. His wife was a strong supporter of his teaching career.

In 1865, Henry and his family moved to McLean County, where Henry attended Illinois State Normal University (ISNU). He graduated in 1868 and went on to earn a Ph.D. in 1882. He became the first principal of the Normal Public School and later joined the faculty at ISNU in 1869. Henry taught geography and history and served as Vice President of ISNU from 1892 to 1912.

Henry was a very active and energetic person. He was involved in many clubs, conferences, and wrote books and papers, including one on teaching geography and local history. He was also known for his patience and kindness, always willing to help his students. Henry had a large library of books on geography and history, which he donated to the university after his death.

Henry's wife, Numanthia, passed away in 1905, and Henry deeply mourned her loss. He retired in 1912 after 43 years at ISNU. After retiring, many people honored him for his long and dedicated service to the university. He passed away on July 17, 1918, after falling ill while walking. He was buried in Bloomington, Illinois.

In 1925, a gymnasium at ISNU was named in his honor. Today, part of the building is still in use by the School of Kinesiology and Recreation.