Zion-Parnassus Academy

by Steve Suther, 2006

The Zion-Parnassus Academy was an eighteenth-century classical school located in Rowan County about a mile east of Thyatira Church (believed to be the oldest Presbyterian church in western North Carolina). The school's founder (and Thyatira's minister), Samuel Eusebius McCorkle, hoped to establish a school that would stress religious as well as classical learning. Its name recalled the Hill of Zion, the residence of King David and his successors, and Parnassus, the Greek mountain sacred to Apollo (god of youth, music, and prophecy) and the Muses (goddesses of poetry, art, and science).

Patterned after David Caldwell's school in Guilford County, Zion-Parnassus added a department for teacher training. For this reason, McCorkle's academy has been referred to as the first normal school in America. Forty-five ministers emerged from Zion-Parnassus before it closed around the beginning of the eighteenth century, as did many lawyers, judges, and state officials. In 1798, when the fledgling University of North Carolina held its first commencement, six of the seven graduates were from Zion-Parnassus.

References:


Additional Resources:

The prophet of Zion-Parnassus: Samuel Eusebius McCorkle by James Franklin Hurley, Julia Goode Eagan, Presbyterian Church in the U.S. Committee of Publication, Published for the authors by Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1934 - 121 pages: http://books.google.com/books/about/The_prophet_of_Zion_Parnassus.html?id=brlVAAAMAAJ

Sam'l E. McCorkle, NC Highway Historical Marker L-20: https://www.ncdcr.gov/about/history/division-historical-resources/nc-highway-historical-marker-program/Markers.aspx?sp=search&k=Markers&sv=L-20

True and Candid Compositions: The Lives and Writings of Antebellum Students in North Carolina: https://docsouth.unc.edu/global/name_search.html?type=9&projid=9&name=Zion-Parnassus%20Academy%20Rowan%20County%20NC&name_id=name0001264

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Authors:

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Origin - location:
Rowan County

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Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press

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