



W. A. G. Brown

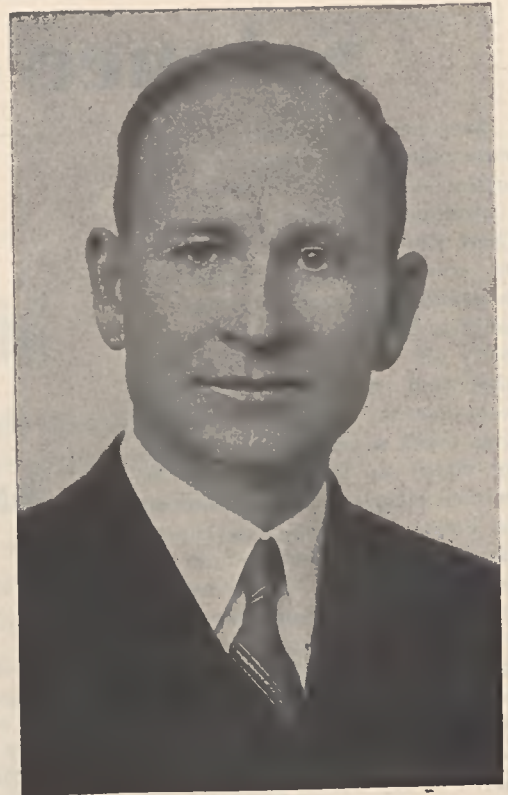
There are many of us who live upon the campus of Mars Hill college and learn but little of the history of achievement that lies behind this institution. Few of us know that Mars Hill college is the oldest educational institution in Western North Carolina, and still fewer of us know anything whatsoever about the men who have presided over the institution. These are the men who have given themselves, that today we might study at this great stronghold of learning.

In the fall of 1856, a school was opened under the name of The French Broad Baptist Institute, receiving its name from the association in which it was located. The French Broad Baptist Institute was the seed from which sprouted the present Mars Hill college. William Albert Gallatin Brown, a graduate of what is now Carson-Newman college in Tennessee, came to this community and served as the first president, retiring in 1858. He was the father of the late Dr. A. E. Brown.

Following the retirement of Mr. Brown, Mr. J. B. Marsh of Bing-

## We Present The Presidents

BY  
DEAN MINTON



Hoyt C. Blackwell

hamton, N. Y. became the administrator and was destined to be the first president of Mars Hill college, for the school secured its charter and present name on February 16, 1859. Mr. Marsh was very much interested in the school and during his administration two new buildings, a dormitory and a teacher's home were built. However, the Civil War swept down upon the nation and Mr. Marsh, because he was a Northerner, resigned. He did not leave the South but was active in revival services among the Confederate troops and in Sunday School work in North Carolina.

Mars Hill now found itself caught in the whirl of conflict. It was divided in loyalties, there being both Union and Confederate influence in the community. Pinkney Rollins, a local man, became president in 1861, but, because of war conditions, including the loss of almost all the men to the army, he was forced to close the school in 1863. He reopened Mars Hill college in June 1865; however, since he was a northern sympathizer, he was forced to resign

from his position in April 1866.

In the dark years following the War, Mars Hill became practically forgotten, and it was a severe struggle to keep the institution alive. In April 1866, John Ammons, a local man who had attended Mars Hill college, became the president. He was a pioneer Baptist minister and a staunch Baptist in every sense of the word. His administration lasted until February 1868.

Next stepping into this position of leadership was Meriwether Lewis, a scholarly man from Virginia. He came to Mars Hill from the Burnsville Academy and was a Methodist. Because of Mr. Lewis' religious affiliations, John Robert Sams, the son of the Mars Hill minister, was the nominal head of the college. After Mr. Lewis' departure in 1871, Mr. Sams became the president of the institution and served in that position until 1872 when, because of Klu Klux strife, Mars Hill college was again forced to close. Its buildings were occupied by a branch of the Oxford Orphanage from 1873 until 1875.