VIDEO: **AUDIO:**

Intro:

"In telling you about Warner, which is in the Dartmouth-Lake Sunapee Region of New Hampshire, we are going to keep our foot on the soft pedal. We haven't the biggest, best or most of anything. Honest, we sometimes wonder why anyone should come up our way. But they do. And they come back again, and they keep coming, and some of them come to stay, and you couldn't pry them loose with a crowbar."

It's a mystery. – *Freeman Tilden*

ANNCR:

Freeman Tilden wrote these words less than one hundred years ago, and they still have a certain true ring to them. The area, which includes the towns of Warner, Webster, Newbury, Sutton, and Bradford, isn't the metropolis some might wish it were, yet it has given birth, and rise, to a number of respected, and admired leaders: teachers, politicians, artists, writers, business people, and just plain old citizens since it was founded in 1774.

Part of that elusive "quality of life" that gives a place its' attractiveness is its citizens commitment to community; to education. This is the story of the people who attended Simonds Free High School, a Warner institution that gave citizens of the region a

VIDEO: **AUDIO:**

higher education at a time when "readin', writin', and cipherin'" was all you needed to get along. Through ninety-nine years, the best of the past and the best of the future were embodied in this place of education. From helping future farmers become more productive, to teaching basic mechanics, from home economics to secretarial classes, Simonds Free High School adjusted its curriculum to meet the needs of the times. The tuition pupils from nearby towns of Warner, Webster, Newbury, Sutton, and Bradford extended the community spirit and influence as these graduates took on positions of responsibility in their own towns. A high percentage of graduates stayed in the area, or returned to teach and direct the family business. Simonds provided a good education, as well as social and sports interests to several generations of area youngsters.

MUSIC UP: montage of Warner scenes

ANNCR:
The early Warner settlers were a tenacious lot. They settled the area before many of the neighboring towns, and worked hard to keep their homesteads. The Indians burned an early sawmill, but the settlers came back, and earned their livelihood through farming, small businesses, and the many mills that dotted the Warner River.

VIDEO: **AUDIO:**

Prior to 1820, there was no highway leading west out of Warner; the town was in a pocket, bypassed by the state built turnpikes, tucked into a valley between several hills. The tides of commerce seemed destined to flow around Warner's shores. But several prominent citizens of Warner, Bradford, and Newbury (then Fishersfield) knew that with travel comes commerce, and determined that their towns would not be bypassed.

A plan was devised to construct a road from the head of Sunapee Lake to Bradford, thus opening a convenient route from Windsor, Vt., through the Sugar and Warner River valleys to Concord. The road was completed before the autumn of 1821.

A stagecoach route was soon established, since this new road was now the shortest distance from north and northwest New Hampshire and Vermont to the growing mill towns of southern New Hampshire and Massachusetts. Stores and hotels sprang up, bringing business and early prosperity to Warner.

In 1849, the Concord and Claremont Railroad passed right up the Warner River valley, ensuring a further stream of commerce to and from Warner, and laying the groundwork for the well-known "ski trains" a century later.

Around 1836, Franklin Simonds and his wife Abigail, settled in Warner, New Hampshire. He established a cotton factory, and ran a business in

VIDEO: **AUDIO:**

Waterloo, also taking the time to serve as sheriff for many years, and as president of Warner Bank. Simonds died in 1869, but a clause in his will was to create the institution that was to preserve his name for all times.

"My wish is to leave some token of my regard for the town of Warner, which has so long been the place of my residence. An appropriation toward the support of a High School in said town occurs to me as the best form of such a token." Simonds "token" was $20,000.

In January of 1870, the seed of Simonds Free High School was planted in the minds of the citizenry at a Warner town meeting. A committee was appointed to solicit subscriptions toward building the high school and by March of the same year, almost 2000 dollars had been raised. Upkeep and expenses would be furnished from the trust fund, and via tuition from students of surrounding towns who wished to attend Simonds. A High School District was formed, and, by the summer of 1871, the high school building was erected and finished.

Simonds' bequest had been fulfilled, and his wife, Abigail, who passed away in 1870 and had been a teacher, added $5000 to her husbands bequest, and an additional $5000 toward the building fund. The entire Simonds Free High School project was completed through the generosity of individuals, among them the Simonds' family, Gilman Bean,

VIDEO: **AUDIO:**

Samuel Dow, George Jones, C.G. McAlpine, and John Robertson, among others.

Now it was time to set up the curriculum, hire teachers, and get the ball rolling.

The new school was dedicated December 1st, 1871. Edmund C. Cole was principal, and Miss Helen Gilbert was preceptress. Sixty students were to begin their higher education at Simonds, taking courses ranging from general topics to the classics. The day of the one room schoolhouse was not yet over, but Simonds Free High School showed that there was something more, and by 1902 Simonds was accredited and placed on the list of approved high schools in New Hampshire.

The curriculum in the first Simonds catalog of 1871 and '72 offered a general course and a classical course, with 12 subjects and 14, respectively. By 1873, the possibility of a higher education was taken into consideration, and the courses went from four years to five, with a College Preparatory course added. A smattering of courses from the catalog of that year showed such diverse topics as Algebra, Physiology, Bookkeeping, Botany, Moral Philosophy, and Surveying. Simonds was beginning to mix the practical with the classical.

In 1873, Simonds turned out its first graduate, Mary Frances Redington, who finished the necessary work in a short time due to prior study.

VIDEO: **AUDIO:**

By the early nineteen hundreds, Simonds Free High School had seen well over a hundred graduates go on to various roles in the surrounding communities, many taking up the teaching profession.

Transportation in the early years was fairly simple: you walked if you lived close enough. School closings had not yet occurred to anyone as being necessary, so, if there was school, you got there. If your parents had the luxury of owning a horse and buggy, you might get a ride to school. If your parents didn't have a buggy, you might get to ride the horse. In winter there was the sleigh, and, early on, a crude form of school bus, pulled by horse or oxen.

Then there was the train. The railroad through Warner was another project of the mid 1800's, which involved the area's entrepreneurs: six of the seventeen incorporators of the Concord and Claremont Railroad were from Warner; the rest were from neighboring towns.

By 1916, Warner had three passenger trains a day every weekday in winter, and one train each way on Sunday. In the summer, service expanded, and Pullman cars were attached to the trains. Simonds students from out of town saw the train ride as a social event, and the short trip from Bradford to Warner was a great way to make friends.

VIDEO: **AUDIO:**

Lena Peasley Currier - 1913:
"Dad used to take me over to Bradford to get the train down to Warner. That's when I went to high school and I'd stay during the week with my cousin."

ANNCR:
WWI:
The First World War took its toll of our nations young in a cruel and swift way. Gone was the "gentility" of earlier wars. Killing machines had replaced the sword and horse, and Warner's youth paid for their courage and patriotism.
In 1920, a Roll of Honor of Simonds graduates was presented to the school by the class of 1919. Of its eighteen stars, three were gold, commemorating the supreme sacrifices of these young men. Twenty-nine other Simonds students served in the "war to end all wars", bringing the total to forty-seven.
Also in 1920, two Simonds students were to write a song, which would bind generations of students down the years. "Simonds, Dear Alma Mater", was written by Helenette Sargent Silver and Dorcas Burdett, and is still being sung by Simonds graduates, wherever their lives lead them

The summer of 1921 marked the 50th Anniversary of Simonds Free High School, and the event was celebrated in conjunction with Warner's Old Home Day. The day was full of reminiscence, celebration, a concert by Rainie's Band of Concord, and a number of sporting events, including a baseball

VIDEO: **AUDIO:**

game, in which half the Warner team members were former Simonds students. The day's celebration was closed with a well-attended concert and dance in the town hall.

That same year saw the appointment of Simonds first woman Principal, Mrs. Florence T. Davis. Although the appointment was made due to the shortage of male candidates brought on by the First World War, Davis' tenure at Simonds maintained the fine educational standards that Simonds was known for. As life got back to normal following the war, the train schedules got back to normal as well.

Dorothy Gove Sawyer – 1922:

"I don't remember very many times being much of any late for school because of the train being late. It was an interesting walk up the hill from the train to the school when the snow was a foot or more deep and blowing like a blizzard! There was one time on a Friday afternoon in the middle of the winter, when I got off the train in Bradford to meet my older sister who was teaching there. On the way through Newbury Cut, the train got stuck in huge snowdrifts. They came with teams of oxen to take passengers to people's houses to be fed and kept warm, and they prevailed upon local men to shovel out the drifts to enable the train to get through the cut. My neighbor, Dan Fortune, and my dad both worked for hours shoveling. Someone asked Dan if

VIDEO: **AUDIO:**

he was tired, and he said, "I was so tired, the seat of my pants hit every railroad tie as I walked down the track." A lady living near the station had made four pumpkin pies and when Dan came back through Newbury, she told him to help himself. He ate all four pies!"
I was a little upset that I missed all the excitement by staying in Bradford that night."

ANNCR:
The Class of 1925 saw Simonds students from Warner, Bradford, Sutton, South Newbury, and Newbury, as might be expected. But Simonds Free High School was also drawing students from farther away; a list of Simonds graduates for 1925 included the towns of Concord and Rochester, New Hampshire, and also Arlington, Massachusetts, and Springfield, Vermont. Resident students were admitted free to Simonds, in accordance with its founder's bequest, and non-residents paid a fee of around seventy-five dollars a year. In some cases, the student's town paid this fee, especially if the town the student was from had no high school. Textbooks and all materials were free.

Isabelle Huntoon Eaton – 1925:

VIDEO: **AUDIO:**

"There was no high school in Salisbury. Therefore I decided to attend Simonds, and lived with Sadie Fisher during the week, coming over on Monday morning, and going home Friday after school for the weekend. Travel was with horse and wagon or sleigh in the winter (a long cold trip) up over Pumpkin Hill – 8 miles!"
The best thing about attending Simonds was that I took the right subjects, made the friendship of teachers and classmates…and graduated from UNH in 1929.

ANNCR:
Children who came from out of town to attend Simonds were called "outsiders", yet they contributed a great deal to both the economy of Warner, and the broader educational view that prevailed at Simonds. The many local inns in Warner would have had a tough time staying open were it not for the help they received from students who attended Simonds, and worked at the inns for their board.

Eleanor McAlister Kalloch – 1931
"Because of my age I either had to repeat the 8th grade in Salisbury or go to high school. My father wanted me to repeat the 8th grade, as girls did not need an education. They only got married and had children. My mother wanted me to try it for one

VIDEO: **AUDIO:**

year and made arrangements with the Tucker family. My father finally let me try it…
I boarded with the Arthur Tucker family on Pumpkin Hill Road…
My folks paid the Tucker family three dollars a week and I also did the dishes and made the beds for my room and board…
Going to Simonds was a big step for me. I went from the one-room school in Salisbury with 16 children or less to a big school with many more children. I made many friends that I still have today."

ANNCR:
In 1931, the first "snow train", operated by the Boston and Maine Railroad, brought 200 passengers from Boston's North Station to Warner. Once the word got back to Boston that a great time could be had in the snows of Warner, a bustling era began, which saw as many as 3,500 visitors a year arriving in Warner. By the height of the era, there were fourteen inns operating in Warner, and managing and feeding the huge crowds took the work of nearly every citizen, including the students of Simonds.

Paul N. Gove – 1928:

VIDEO: **AUDIO:**

" When the train was late getting in to Warner in the afternoon (and it was in the winter), we used to think that the stationmaster was an "old grouch"! As I grew older I realized that 30-40 teenagers cooped up in the depot for an hour or more was no picnic."

ANNCR:
Because of Simonds Free High School's size, students were not in the position of being in competition for the various programs. Sports, dramatics, debating, music, and the Simonds Log kept students busy, and everyone was involved.

Ruth Brown Martsolf – 1939
"As there were no really obvious rich or poor, socially superior or inferior restrictions, everyone had a chance to be good at *something.* That gave me the confidence to try everything, go on to college, and find my way uninhibited."

ANNCR:
But Simonds wasn't all work. With all the extra-curricular activities that were offered, and the fact that Simonds *was* a high school, there were plenty of pranks.

Norma Ebbs – 1938
I remember once when the boys all ate garlic, and the whole building smelled like it very strong – so

VIDEO: **AUDIO:**

we girls went down to the store and bought cheap perfume, "Blue Waltz" was one of the kinds, then we poured it all over us the next day and drove them nuts! Fair play!
The principal agreed that the boys deserved it, and we all agreed that we wouldn't try any more tricks on each other.

ANNCR:
Many of the Simonds students came back to teach, and the line between teacher and student was sometimes a narrow one. This fostered a close relationship between teacher and student, and resulted in a great respect on the students' part for the job.

Evelyn Harris Berg – 1939:
"The biggest impact for me was the impression teachers made on me. Ruth Bresnahan and Mary Gentzel Cogswell made me realize how much I wanted to be a teacher. I also truly respected Bill Glavin and Principal Hounsell. When I graduated as Valedictorian, I was determined to go to teachers' college. Superintendent Sinclair promised me a job if I went to teacher's college. I did and in 1943 he gave me a job in Newbury, salary $1050."

ANNCR:

VIDEO: **AUDIO:**

Although World War II began in 1939, nothing could have prepared us for the shock when we woke up on the morning of December 7th, 1941, to discover that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor. That one horrific attack galvanized the United States into action, and life would never be the same for the citizens of Warner and their children.

Beryl (Moshier) Cloues – 1944
"(When we entered World War II) My dad went into the Naval Service in Boston, and my mother became Postmistress in Melvin (Mills). Those were difficult years, and at times, lonely."

ANNCR:
The war effort was a lonely time for many of those who kept the home fires burning, but there was much work to do. From 1941 to 1945, the Simonds building saw new kinds of usage: First aid courses were offered, and various civil defense organizations held meetings there. There were Nutrition classes to combat the hardship of food rationing. By 1944, the students of Simonds made an astonishing contribution of labor to the agricultural effort. Twenty-two thousand bushels of apples were harvested, 30 acres of corn were cut and bundled, and five silos filled, making a total of 8,362 man-hours of work. And this was at a time

VIDEO: **AUDIO:**

when enrollment at Simonds was down due to the vagaries of war. Everyone pitched in, the teachers included.

Ruth Whitoneah(?) Webster – 1942 –1945 Teacher
"We became apple pickers in the fall – sleep was scarce during wartime, as all pupils and teachers went to apple orchards to pick or help harvest the crops. We met at the school, and traveled by school bus."

ANNCR:
Even with the war raging in Europe and the Pacific, the students of Simonds were able maintain a certain level of normalcy in their lives. On August 23, 1946, Simonds celebrated its 75th Anniversary on Old Home Day Sunday.
The day began with a service at the Federated Church of Warner. The speaker at the service was T. Lawrence Davis, President of the Department of Business Administration of Boston University, and a Simonds graduate. The celebration included musical presentations, debates, a short history of Simonds, and a lively singing of "Simonds, Dear Alma Mater".
Simonds must have indeed been dear to many, since about 400 people attended the celebration. It was a needed break during the war.

VIDEO: **AUDIO:**

Lois (Clark) Dakin – 1946
"Even during wartime with rationing and curtailment of non-essential travel, the school provided opportunities for sports and games between Simonds and other high schools in other towns. There was an annual winter carnival, and school-sponsored dances. We were encouraged to raise money for a senior class trip to Boston. Cultural activities were available to interested participants, such as annual class play productions, and participation in music organizations. I was in the high school chorus, and participated in a district orchestra consisting of members from Contoocook and Henniker. There was lots of school spirit. The school was small enough that we knew everyone."

ANNCR:
Simonds Free High School's inextricable link to Warner and the surrounding towns was a large part of its success. The towns supported the school, and the school supported the town. Many a Simonds student met his or her spouse during their years at the school. Many students went on to attend college, many came back to teach at Simonds, and some were content to simply utilize the life skills they had learned during their stay at Simonds.

Pauline E.P. Scruton – 1941:

VIDEO: **AUDIO:**

"Over the years it has made me proud to say I graduated from Simonds. I have been very busy raising my family and helping my husband on the farm. My family in most cases has obtained a better education than I had, but I feel I had sufficient for the life I led. I can't say I think education today is better than in my time. The world sure has changed and we had to change with it. When Ida Parsons wrote the prophecy for our yearbook she saw me in a farmhouse with black and white cows outside. I was working on the books, and I sure have done my share of that."

ANNCR:
Even though its' student body was small, Simonds Free High School was able to carry on a number of social functions that would be the envy of any size school today. The Winter Carnival was one example. It began before the arrival of the Ski Tow at the Warner Ski Area, which would later put Warner on the map as a prime New England winter destination.
The Winter Carnival was the beginning of a tradition which, by 1951, included ski contests, a basketball game in the Simonds gymnasium, a baked bean dinner at the Town Hall, run by Simonds students, and numerous ski and snowshoeing events. The high point of the carnival

VIDEO: **AUDIO:**

was the Saturday evening Carnival Ball, at which a Queen was picked from the Simonds Senior Class.

Dorothy Colins Rogers Heald – 1946:
"I loved high school and felt very fortunate to be able to take part in the minstrel shows, chorus, variety shows, Ballard's dance classes. I also was able to play in softball and basketball games because it was a small school. My own children attended such large schools that they had too much competition to be chosen to play on the teams."

ANNCR:
The war ended as abruptly as it had begun, and the Atomic Age was upon us. But victory, once again, was not without its costs, and Warner paid the toll. The day Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, a Warner resident, Ensign Edward B. Cloues, went down with the battleship Arizona and all hands. Sergeant John E. Bigelow, John W. Mills, Donald E. Palmer, Roy F. Sanborn, and Willis I. Witcher, all of Warner, and Kenneth L. Brown of Bradford, gave their lives in the actions of World War II.

Phyllis Bean Parsons – 1948
"On V-E Day, classes were dismissed and we went to the Town Hall where WMUR did a *live* radio broadcast of people in Warner."

VIDEO: **AUDIO:**

ANNCR:
That broadcast, from the stage of Warner's Town Hall, was transmitted over the Blue Network. It included an interview with Mrs. Joseph Carew, who had five sons in the service. Also interviewed were John Chandler, Junior, editor of *The Kearsarge Independent and Times*, Mrs. Susan Tulley, editor of *Home Fires*, a newsletter which went to all Warner boys in the service, and a number of other Warner citizens, including Simonds students, and Norman Hartfiel, headmaster of Simonds.

Roxanne Smith – 1954:
" My first year at Simonds in 1949, a neighbor drove me with his daughter to the Newbury station where the Newbury students rode the Boston and Maine train to Warner. Students in Bradford and Melvin Mills joined us. We all got off at the Warner station and walked up "steep deep" to Simonds. In the afternoon we traveled by the Boston and Maine bus? Home. In September of 1950 or '51, a school bus took over the era of the train.
I met my husband, Robert Dean Smith at Simonds High School, and we were married in October of 1955. I might not have met him had I attended another high school."

ANNCR:

VIDEO: **AUDIO:**

A high point in Warner's lively calendar of events is the Fall Foliage Festival, which always requires a great deal of volunteerism on the part of Warner residents. Over the years, Simonds students have always pitched in to do their part. The Festival, begun in 1947, is a non-profit organization, which is devoted to civic improvement. If you look around Warner, you'll find that much of Warner's infrastructure, from the Fire Station, to the Pillsbury Free Library, has benefited from the Festival.

Carol Brown Howard – 1961
"We always did a float for the Fall Foliage Festival Parade. What great fun! Class day involved everyone working on a school project. We all had a good time and worked well as a team because we were a small class."

ANNCR:
The first hint that the time of Simonds Free High School might be coming to an end was in the Warner Town Report of 1958, which made passing reference to the trend toward consolidation of small high schools.
By 1963, the writing was on the wall: A School Warrant was passed at town meeting which resulted in the towns of Warner, Bradford, Newbury, Wilmot, Sutton, Springfield, and New London

VIDEO: **AUDIO:**

becoming the Kearsarge Regional School District. The merger became effective in 1967, and Simonds was obliged to carry on until the regional school building was completed in 1969.

On June 20th, 1970, Simonds was once again celebrated, but this time, the feeling was bittersweet. This celebration marked the passing of Simonds Free High School into history.

Miriam E. Savory, Simonds class of 1909 put it all into perspective when she said:

"The passing years bring many changes, whether for better or for worse only the future can tell, but the record of Simonds Free High School over its ninety-nine years of continuous service shows the major part it has played in the history and development of Warner, as well as Bradford, Sutton, Hopkinton, Newbury, Webster, and other towns. The young people from these communities shared the incalculable influence for good it has been in the lives of the hundreds of students and their teachers who had the privileges of its advantages.

We can only give our final salute to "Dear Old Simonds!! Hail and Farewell!!"

ANNCR:

Simonds Free High School is gone, but alive in the hearts of her graduates. And the mystery that Freeman Tilden spoke about almost a hundred years

VIDEO: **AUDIO:**

ago is solved: what drew those early settlers here was the beauty and bounty of the region. What kept them here was their tenacity. What made the region grow was its citizens commitment to their towns, and their schools. From the days of the one-room schoolhouse to the 99 years of Simonds Free High School, there has always been that commitment, and it has helped preserve a way of life that will live on into the next century.

Betsy Bartlett – 1970
"It was an idyllic time of life for me that was filled with going from one activity to the next as quickly as possible, and not enough hours in the day. It was an atmosphere that the private schools and organized community activities of today are trying to capture, and some of them do a pretty good job, but the Warner/Simonds era, for me, was a little piece of heaven."

Closing Montage with music. **Credits**