

# OHS Memories

Spring/Summer 2018

## Alumni Newsletter Reborn Through Efforts of OHS Museum

by Virginia Thompson

Do you remember receiving the Owatonna High School alumni newsletter, *The Owatonnian*, almost 20 years ago? This newsletter was published by the Owatonna High School Alumni Association. The mission of the Alumni Association was to keep an updated list of OHS alumni, plus offer information through *The Owatonnian* about reunions, community happenings, and general OHS interest stories.



This is a “rebirth” of that newsletter, from the current OHS Museum Advisory Committee.

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## Calender of OHS Events

- National Honors Society Lions Banquet  
**April 2**, 6PM, OHS Cafeteria
- OHS Spring Play  
**April 19, 20, & 21**, 7PM, OHS Auditorium
- OHS Spring Play, Matinee Performance  
**April 22**, 1:30PM, OHS Auditorium
- Prom Grand March  
**May 12**, 7:00PM, 4 Seasons
- After Prom  
**May 12**, Midnight - 4:00AM,  
at Owatonna Middle School
- Graduation Ceremony  
**June 3**, 2:00PM, 4 Seasons

## Upcoming Reunions

- August 11: Class of ‘73  
(Steele County Historical Society)
- August 18, 11AM: Class of ‘53  
(Owatonna Elk’s Club)
- August 18: Class of ‘78  
(Mineral Springs Park)
- September 7 - 9: Class of ‘56,  
Eightieth Birthday Party  
(Location to be announced)

Owatonna High School Museum || 507-444-8800 || [museum@owatonna.k12.mn.us](mailto:museum@owatonna.k12.mn.us)

<https://ohsmuseum.wixsite.com/mysite> || 333 East School Street, Owatonna, MN 55060

# History 101: Merle Allen, Veteran of the Great War, Respected Teacher and Community Leader

When the US entered the Great War in April 1917, Congress took the unprecedented step of passing the Selective Service Act, which required men between the ages of 21 and 31 to register for the draft.

The first registration date was June 5, 1917. Merle Allen had just graduated from college in Wisconsin when he filled out his registration form. He enlisted in the US Army, achieving the rank of sergeant during his service.

Following his service, he found employment as a business teacher at Owatonna High School. He advised the Commercial Club, a student organization designed to help students make career decisions. After 17 years, Allen went to work for Federated Insurance.

While at OHS and Federated, Allen served in the National Guard, was a founding member of both the American Legion and the Izaak Walton League, and a member of the Lions Club.

Allen died in 1987 at the age of 91, having made a big impact on his adopted hometown.

Merle Allen,  
circa 1930



## Owatonna Events:

- April 20 – 21: My Man Godfrey (Little Theatre of Owatonna)
- May 3 – 6: Corky's 39th Annual Early Bird Men's Softball Classic (Steele County Fairground Fields)
- May 5: Rustic Mama's Market (4 Seasons Center)
- May 5: Farmer's Market begins (Central Park)
- May 6: Owatonna Bike Blessing (Steele County Fairgrounds)
- May 11: Annual Spring Pickleball Tournament
- May 28: Memorial Day Service
- June 1 – 3: Smokin' in Steele (Fair Square Park)
- June 16: Harry Wenger Marching Band Festival (Downtown Owatonna, 11AM)
- July 15: Extravaganza at Village of Yesteryear (Steele County Historical Society)
- July 26 – 28: Crazy Days
- July 28 - 29: Art on the Hills (Owatonna Art Center, West Hills)
- August 14 - 19: Steele County Free Fair – A Century Scene in 2018
- September 22: CultureFest (Wilson School)

*For details on community events, please contact the Owatonna Chamber of Commerce and Tourism or visit their website, <https://owatonna.org/>*

**Join us April 19, 6:30PM at the OHS Museum for our Spring Work Night and you too can help preserve OHS history.**

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We will offer similar information here and more. We support the mission of the OHS Museum to “seek, collect, preserve, and share OHS history starting with the first graduation class of 1877 and into the future.”

## **Contribute to OHS History**

As with any organization following a vision, we need and would appreciate your volunteer help in any of the following areas:

- Become a committee member
- Provide financial support
- Help keep our website updated
- Attend work sessions to keep museum items updated and organized
- Attend work sessions to clean museum showcases
- Donate artifacts for the museum
- Create or suggest articles for this newsletter
- Become an OHS Museum tour guide

## **Contribute to OHS Museum Newsletter**

Questions, story ideas, and comments for this newsletter or the museum may be mailed to OHS Museum, 333 East School Street Owatonna, MN, 55060; emailed to [museum@owatonna.k12.mn.us](mailto:museum@owatonna.k12.mn.us); or directed to any of the people listed below.

### **OHS Museum Advisory Board, 2017**

- Darryl Hill - OHS Museum Founder/Director
- Juanita Drabek - OHS Museum Admin.
- Shirley Abraham - Class of 1966
- Julie Kruger - Class of 1970
- Dan Moeckly - Class of 1995
- Deb Stewart - Class of 1973
- Jeanne Buecksler - Class of 1971
- Andrew McGuire - Class of 2005
- Phill Parker - Class of 1978
- Ginny Thompson - Class of 1955

## **Get in Touch With Us**

If you are your class chairperson, please send your name, address, email address, phone number, year of graduation, and class list to one of the addresses listed above. We also welcome information regarding class reunions, class news, death announcements, and photos.

Thank you for supporting the OHS Museum!

# The Origin of the Owatonna High School Museum

By Julie Kruger

Thirty-seven years ago the OHS auditorium was remodeled to meet current safety standards. Doors were added, aisles were widened, and original seating was removed and replaced with wide, soft-cushion seating.

Darryl Hill was an assistant principal at the time and, being a bit of a collector, he carried a couple of the old chairs to his office. Because of space limitations, he dismantled the chairs and attached the end braces to his office wall. Ironwork in the end braces formed the letters OHS.

The display received a lot of interest and led people to offer their own OHS memorabilia to Darryl. Soon he had boxes full of OHS history and he needed a plan! A museum advisory board is listed below.

The museum has grown throughout the years and become a popular feature on the main floor of the "1921 building" – located next to the auditorium and across the hall from the current office. You may perform an internet search for "Owatonna High School Museum" and view a few photos of the displays.

The museum features aspects of the school's history ranging from the late 1800s to the achievements of current students. As a visitor you may discover what a football uniform looked like in 1920. Roughly 90 years of OHS class rings are on display. View the gym suits your grandparents had to wear.



Maybe you didn't know our school colors were black and orange at one time, or just what year the Indians became the Huskies. Information about OHS grads lost in war is respectfully displayed, as well as information about other OHS grads who have gone on to national and international achievements. Yearbooks, school newspapers, and other class information are archived by year and loaned out to classes planning reunions.

## First OHS Museum Advisory Board

### Alumni

Bob Doyle, 1942  
Harland Strohschein, 1946  
Dale Torgerson, 1946  
Ev Berg, 1955  
Carol Hacmac Elsner, 1976  
Patty Davis Wilson, 1981  
Steve Erdman, 1970

### Teachers

Ginny Steele Thompson, 1955

### Faculty

Nels and Bonnie Thompson  
Darryl Hill

### Student

Nicolas Elsner, 2004

A high school museum such as ours is a rare thing and something to treasure and preserve. The current advisory board is so very thankful to all those who have supported the museum through the years with both memorabilia and monetary donations.

A chair end brace from Darryl's office wall was the first item placed in the museum and still resides there today.