

OTTAWA HIGH SCHOOL HALL OF FAME

2010



MERLE BURKE

Teacher 1933-1968



Merle Burke was a teacher, author, traveler, and radio personality. He received his undergraduate degree from Illinois Wesleyan University and received postgraduate education at Illinois State University and American University in Washington, D.C. He moved to Ottawa in 1933 to teach history at OTHS and retired in 1968 as Chairman of the Social Science Department. During his first trip around the world in 1929 he had private interviews with, among others, Chang Kai Shek and Mahatma Gandhi. He lectured in Europe and the United States for many years. As a radio personality, his program was awarded the Outstanding New Program in the State of Illinois while at WLPO radio. He authored two history books and joined with Upton Close to write "The Ladder of History." His co-author, Close, also had a radio program, in San Francisco, and was the first person on radio to report the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Burke was a 65 year member, Paul Harris Fellow, former president, and district governor of Rotary International among other civic accomplishments. He was awarded the National Freedom Foundation at Valley Forge Award in 1960 for outstanding service.