



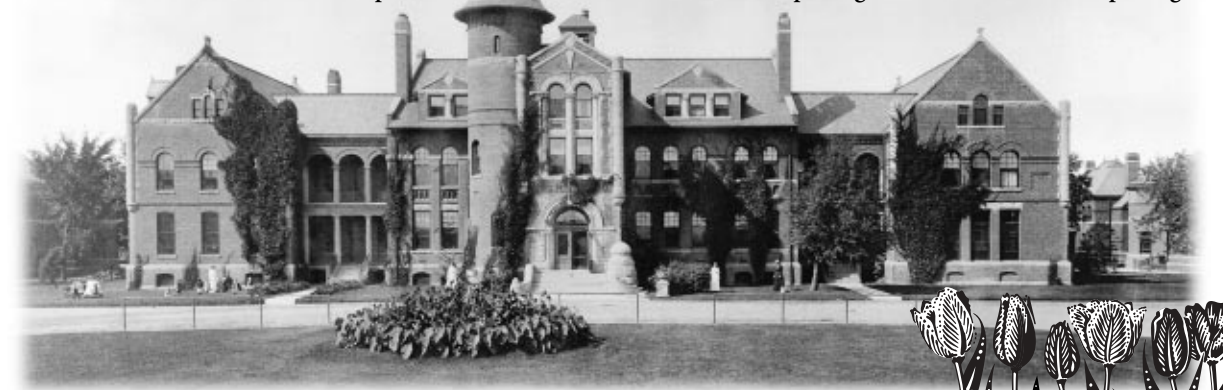
State School  
Orphanage Museum

540 West Hills Circle  
Owatonna, Minnesota 55060

Nonprofit Organization  
U.S. Postage Paid  
Permit No. 7  
Owatonna, MN 55060

# Minnesota State Public School Orphanage Museum

540 West Hills Circle, Owatonna, MN 55060 | phone: 1-800-423-6466 | e-mail: info@orphanagemuseum.com | www.orphanagemuseum.com



## History Matters

SPRING  
2005

This Spring the Minnesota Historical Society has emphasized *Why History Matters...*

**"History has the unique ability to connect generations of families and neighbors, and it creates a sense of belonging to a world outside our own backyards."**

As we have many times stated, one of the greatest rewards of restoring the history of the State School these past 12 years is that it has "connected generations of State School families." Countless times we have heard children and grandchildren say: "He/She would never talk about their State School experience." Or, "I just wish I'd asked more questions."

Consequently, stories were rarely passed down in State School families, and likewise, younger generations in Owatonna were never made aware of the unique history of the State School.

In this issue we would like to continue giving some insights into those early days at the State School, and in Owatonna, as recorded in Owatonna newspapers of that day. (Our comments are in parenthesis.)

### July 10, 1885

*(Little known facts)*

"The city of Red Wing was angered that Gov. Hubbard did not lobby harder for Red Wing to

become the site of the State School. However, the Governor had lived in Red Wing and did not want to use his influence to promote his hometown. Only time will tell whether his own townsmen will ever forgive him or not."

### August 14, 1885

*(Realizing the consequences of institutionalization)*

"John N. Foster, Superintendent of State Public School of Michigan visiting Owatonna location: 'He argues against keeping them (the children) in the school any longer than is absolutely necessary; he says that asylum life is not beneficial for children. In the school everything is done for them; they rise, go to their work and play, march to and from their meals, all at the tap of a bell. Asylum life teaches but little self-reliance and is unnatural. The home is the natural place for children and they should be placed therein.'"

### July 3, 1885

*(Another little known fact)*

"Site Number 2 considered for the State School was on the "east side" of Owatonna, within two blocks of the grounds of the Baptist academy (Pillsbury)." (What a difference this would have made in Owatonna's landscape had this occurred. The Number 1 site on the west side of Owatonna was chosen.)

Return Service Requested

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Interested in purchasing *The Children Remember* or a board on the Memorial Boardwalk? Please fill in the form below. Your support is greatly appreciated!

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

- Yes, I'd like to order a copy of *The Children Remember* documentary video at \$29.95 plus \$5.00 for shipping/handling.
- Yes, I'd like to order a copy of *The Children Remember* documentary DVD at \$34.95 plus \$5.00 for shipping/handling.
- Yes, I'd like to purchase \_\_\_ board(s) at \$35.00 each!  Yes, I'd like to make a tax-deductible donation of \_\_\_\_\_.

If you wish to purchase a board, please print clearly the words you wish to have inscribed.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Mail your check, along with this form to: MN State School Orphanage Museum, 540 West Hills Circle, Owatonna, MN 55060. Checks should be written out to: MN State School Orphanage Museum.

**Important: To ensure receiving future Newsletters, please inform us of any address change.**

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## July 3, 1885

*(Owatonna's vision of the impact of the new State School)*

"The institution will grow in importance and increase in magnitude as years roll by. The buildings and grounds will be an ornament to the locality and render it attractive. Celebrity will be given to Owatonna in consequence of the institution; the result will be a growth in population and an increase in the value of real estate. The beauty of the city and the surrounding country and the value of our mineral springs will then become generally known and appreciated. This school will be the first step forward in the onward career of prosperity. It will help us just as the State institutions have helped Faribault and other cities, just as Carlton College has helped Northfield. We will be well repaid for the cost of the site."

## November 5, 1886

"A sufficient number of applications for admission to the State School have already been received to fill the cottages."

## December 3, 1886

"The first 3 children entered the State School from Steele County. Next were 5 from Albert Lea."

## April 15, 1887

"There will be no more important institution in the State than the State Public School in Owatonna."

## May 13, 1887

"President Crandall and Superintendent Merrill, of the State Public School, purchased a number of fine Holstein cows and calves for that institution last Monday, from the herd of Mr. E. P. Taylor of Merton. The purchase consists of a full blooded heifer, a five-sixteenth cow with calf, a seven-eighths cow and a three quarters cow. The price paid for the entire lot was \$400. It is expected to add a thorough-bred bull from some other herd."

## June 17, 1887

"The boys' cottage is full at the State School but there is still room to accommodate a few more girls."

## July 22, 1887

"A few weeks ago two children recently received at the State Public School were found to be affected with the scarlet fever. They were immediately taken from the children's cottage and isolated in an upper room in the superintendent's cottage. As a result of wise care, the children recovered and the disease was not communicated to any other inmates of the school."

## April 22, 1887

"53 children have been received; first barn is contracted to be built."

## September 2, 1887

*(One of first to have electric lights in city)*

"Contracts were made for the heating and electric light apparatus, the plumbing and the building of a tunnel from steam plant to main building."

## September 9, 1887

*(How the orchard came into being)*

"Mr. E. H. S. Dartt (founder of Dartts Park), superintendent of the State Forest and Fruit Tree



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Experimental station at Owatonna, has laid out a nursery and planted quite a variety of forest and fruit trees, at the State School grounds, considering that the work has been done without either salary or appropriation. The work already accomplished by Mr. Dartt under difficulties, shows how valuable his services will be to the State when the station receives the money encouragement to which it is entitled."

## August 5, 1887

"The Mayor has requested business men in Owatonna close their places of business between the hours of 12 o'clock and 5 P.M., August 9, it being the occasion of the laying of the cornerstone of the State Public School."

## August 12, 1887

*(Laying of Cornerstone August 9)*

"Heaven Smiled and the People Rejoiced."

## October 21, 1887

"The State School for Indigent Children has already become known as one of the grand charitable institutions of Minnesota. It was referred to especially by President Cleveland in his speech at St. Paul. Owatonna is fortunate in getting the institution that will stand at the head of the charities of the state."

## May 18, 1888

"Miss D. Carpenter, a matron of one of the cottages at the Minnesota State Public School, died on the 9th of acute inflammation of the stomach caused by taking an over-dose of borax. At the time she was suffering from congestion of the lungs and some one recommended borax as a remedy. Not being acquainted with its character, she took about half an ounce within twenty four hours. This case should serve as a warning against using medicine without the advice of a competent physician."

## July 27, 1888

"Charles Johnson, age 11 years, died at the State School last Sunday of brain fever. The funeral took place Monday and the remains were interred in the cemetery laid out on the farm. The lad came from Brainerd and was among the first admitted to the School during 1887."

## November 16, 1888

"Last Monday evening the State Public School was open for the inspection of the citizens of Owatonna and was visited by a large number of ladies and gentlemen, who were pleasantly entertained and shown through the buildings by Supt. Merrill and his assistants."

"Those who visited the State Public School last Monday evening realized how convenient it would be to have electric lights in the city."

## December 7, 1888

"Twice, only, since the institution opened two years ago, has the chapel been opened for a pathetic little funeral, where tears were shed, not so much because the bruised and tired little feet were spared from further traveling the rough path that had been their way, but because of the absence of those who should have mourned there."

## February 1, 1889

"Mr. Ovid Wood met with a very painful accident last Friday while helping to unload ice at the State School. As he attempted to catch a piece of ice that was about to fall. Mr. A. G. Reece, who was assisting, endeavored to catch the ice with the tonges at the same time and caught Mr. Wood's left hand with them. The hand was terribly lacerated."

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## May 17, 1889

“A child with deformed feet, at the State School, was recently operated upon by the faculty of the medical department of the State University. If the operation proves successful, and the indications are that it will, the boy will be saved from the sad fate that threatened him of remaining a cripple through life.”

## Fourth of July 1889

“Fathers left businesses, mothers left cares, and with sisters, cousins and aunts, joined with the children in an old fashioned Fourth, while probably few thoughts of the 104 little waifs at the State School but thanks to the bounty of our state and big heart of their superintendent, they had a right royal 4th.

“About 10:30 a.m. a number of decorated wagons and carriages left the State School loaded to the brim with happy children and their foster parents, if I may so speak, bound for a day at the Spring, on reaching which, they scattered in every direction like a lot of young partridges turned loose; in a minute the 'woods were full of them,' and 'til 6 o'clock there was no let up in fun except to partake of their picnic dinner, bountifully provided for them, and that was double fun.”

## September 18, 1889

“Yesterday was a long day to be remembered by the children of the State School. Mr. Lewis, agent in the absence of Prof. Merrill, accompanied the little wards of the state to the fair grounds bringing their dinners, which the little ones partook of in the exposition building. Later the children were formed in four rows and were marched homeward, making a very pretty sight.”



## Two Grants Received

### The Women's Club of Owatonna

The Museum Board recently applied for a grant offered by The Women's Club of Owatonna. Each year their proceeds from the Holiday Charity "Jingle Bell Ball" go to a project that would help sustain the quality of life in Owatonna. Our project was selected and we received \$722.34 to start the installation of audio equipment. Initially, three stations will be placed on the grounds of the West Hills complex to coincide with the outdoor walking tour guide already in use. You might remember that we had ten separate stations telling the story of the State School at the 150th Celebration. We do not have the funds to accomplish the whole project at the present time, but still feel it will be a great enhancement to the grounds/museum, for the community, and for the touring sector that continues to take interest in this great piece of Owatonna history. Donations will only help us expand the audio project. If you would like to help, please send monies to the above address, denoting a contribution towards the audio project.

### Why an audio tour?

- To fulfill our educational mission of preserving the history of the State School Orphanage.
- To tell the State School story in a new and exciting way.
- To reach those who learn by seeing and hearing.
- To encourage more people to venture through the beautiful West Hills grounds and, at the same time, add greater understanding of the buildings and the history each one holds.

### Insty Prints

A \$700 grant was received from Insty Prints in Owatonna for help with printing costs associated with the museum

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We extend a sincere thank you to both the Women's Club and to Insty Prints for these wonderful grant opportunities.

## Campus News

### Spring has arrived.

Soon all the planters and flower beds will be bursting with color. The new Rock Garden will be in its second year and in early bloom.

The cemetery gate will be open. The first walkway of the boardwalk will be completed.

### Aloha!

We recently booked a bus tour group all the way from Hawaii that will visit in September 2005. How does the bus get across the ocean?

### Memorial Boardwalk

We are grateful to all of you who have supported the Memorial Boardwalk project. The first walkway is filled and the second will be started this spring! Nearly 700 boards have been sold to date.

Thanks to the City of Owatonna, a cement continuation of the Boardwalk to meet the SeniorPlace parking lot will be installed this spring. This will provide an excellent exit/entrance (handicapped accessible) from that direction.

If you would like to purchase a board, please see the back page of this newsletter.

### "The Children Remember" Documentary

Over 1,000 copies of the documentary have been sold to date. Sales have come from all parts of the country.

It was nice to hear that some PBS stations have been re-airing the video. Check with your local PBS

station to see (or encourage) if a second airing is planned for your area.

The Children Remember on VHS or DVD can be purchased: by telephone: 507-444-4321 via credit card, by mail via check, or at our website via PayPal.

### New Board Member

We welcome Greg Thomas as our newest Board member. Greg is the Facility and Grounds Superintendent of the Government buildings for the City of Owatonna. This includes all of West Hills. His knowledge and expertise of the buildings and grounds will be of great value to our Board.

### Present Board Members:

Maxine Ronglien, Chairperson  
Shelby Zempel, Vice Chairperson  
Corky Kolander, Secretary  
Sandy Dinse  
Deb Kotec  
Carol Raetz  
Harvey Ronglien  
Nancy Sletten  
Greg Thomas

### Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Minnesota State Public School Orphanage Museum Board will be held on Tuesday, May 3, at 4 PM at West Hills. The public is welcome to attend.

## Do you enjoy receiving our Newsletter?

If so, would you consider a \$5 or \$10 (or whatever amount annual donation) towards printing and mailing costs? Everyone involved in producing the newsletter is a **volunteer**, but the printing and

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postage per issue costs nearly \$500. In order to continue four issues a year, we need your support or it will be necessary to cut back on the issues. (Remember, all donations are **tax-exempt!**)

If you no longer wish to receive the newsletter, please write us or email: info@orphanagemuseum.com. OR, if you have a **change in address**, please advise us. Every newsletter returned costs \$0.37 to re-send.

Since we are a small organization existing on donations, every dollar is very important to us. THANKS FOR YOUR HELP!

## We are most grateful for the following donations received since October 2004:

Rod and Lorna Young	Michael Carey
LaDonna Von Bargaen	Jane Downs
Jerry Robinson	Lorraine Anderson
Norma Buxton	Roy Malm
Ike Gross	Virginia Betlach
Victor Laskowske	Angela Anderson
Carol Zetah	Clarice Federly
Rosemary Link	Arlend Wilson
'til Kraay	Hiram Drache
Bill and Fay Kottke	Daniel Gorman
Jerry Prondzinski	George Brose
Orville Beuthien	Marcella Smith
Elizabeth Witt	Vernon and Lou Johnson
Kathleen Sherman	

## Memorials given by:

Harvey and Maxine Ronglien  
Ramana Wesely  
Bernadine Haberman  
Alan Wold  
Lorraine Hanson  
Kathleen Thiem  
Karen Meyer

## Memorial Gift on Grounds

Robert Raymond Family

*\*\*We have a very special and very limited opportunity for a few significant memorial gifts to be given on the grounds. Please call 507-444-4321 if you are interested.\*\**

## State Schoolers Deceased

Howard "Nick" Nickerson, Jr.	Emil Haugen
Roger Robbenolt	Mary DuFault
Alfred (Segalstrom) Fowler	
Thomas J. Hannigan, Sr.	

## State Schooler's Poem

### To You Sons and Daughters Who Have a Mother Living Today

by Robert Essig, State Schooler from 1934 - 1944

Never hurt her, but love her in a caring way.  
Although I never saw my dear mother's face,  
Or felt her warm and most tender embrace;  
I never did see her kind and loving smile,  
When I was just a sad and unhappy child:  
I have often had a longing to speak her name,  
But when some other person says "mother"  
I feel a pain.  
I would like very much to hear my mother's voice;  
It would fill the emptiness in me to unknown rejoice.  
Even though I will never see my mother  
in this empty life,  
I know the dear Lord will repay me  
with a beautiful price,  
Because I look forward to the day I shall soon meet  
My sweet, kind and loving mother  
in everlasting peace

## Photos at Right:

These photos of girls in their cottages in the 1930s and of matrons were recently received from Helen Curran of Waseca, MN. They belonged to her aunt Ceil Conway Gallagher (known as Miss Conway.) They are the only pictures we have of girls inside a cottage in the 1930s. Please write or email us if you know anyone in the pictures!

