

BEAVER DAM UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
WALL OF FAME

Harlowe Randall Hoyt
2016 Outstanding Alumnus



Mr. Harlowe Randall Hoyt graduated from Beaver Dam High School in 1899. He began his writing career as a police reporter for the Milwaukee Free Press. He was recognized nationally for his short stories, poems and historical perspectives, which appeared in national magazines and syndicated nationally in newspapers. His love of theater led him to a career as a drama critic that spanned 60 years. He was known as the nation's Dean of American Theater Critics.

Mr. Hoyt was a successful playwright, writing several plays that toured successfully across the Midwest. He received national acclaim for his local true story, "The Defender of the Cameron Dam." The success of this play led him to the job of an editor for the Cleveland Leader, later the Cleveland Plain Dealer. Hopeful Broadway productions tested in Cleveland, and Mr. Hoyt's reviews often determined if a play would proceed to Broadway.

Harlowe Randall Hoyt became acquaintances with Thomas Edison, which led him to write screenplays for the first silent movies in the nation for Edison's movie studio. He was familiar with the actors breaking into silent pictures, which led him to become the first nationally syndicated Hollywood gossip columnist. He was also the first internationally syndicated cartoonist with his cartoon strip called "Dramatic Events in Bible History."

Mr. Hoyt received greatest acclaim from his book, "Town Hall Tonight." It chronicles his fond memories of growing up in Beaver Dam and his brief encounters with Mark Twain, Harry Houdini, P.T. Barnum, Col. Tom Thumb and the Ringling Brothers. Actor Hal Holbrook consulted with Harlowe on how to play Mark Twain for his one-man show on Mark Twain. The book is still used by universities nationwide in classes focused on the early days of theater. Two plays have been written based on "Town Hall Tonight", as well as a thesis biography of Harlowe Randall Hoyt's life. Mr. Hoyt retired as a drama critic at the age of 80 as the oldest living critic in the world.