

WOMEN OF WINSLOW



Verla Oare

(Born 1904; died 1992)

Verla set very high standards and instilled a sense of achievement in over 5,000 Winslow students . . . giving them the gift of knowledge and a solid foundation to build their lives on. – From the 1990 Proclamation for “Verla Oare Day”

Verla Oare taught generations of Winslowites during her 44 years with the Winslow Unified School District.

Verla L. Oare was born in Herrick, Illinois, on July 27, 1904. Her family moved to Arizona in 1919 and to Winslow in 1921, when she was 17 years old. The following year Verla graduated from Winslow High School, where she was a star debater and always on the honor roll.

Verla earned her bachelor’s degree in history on scholarship at the University of Arizona in 1926 and immediately began teaching in Winslow. She earned her master’s degree in history from Stanford University in 1938. In between she traveled around the United States and Europe, where she purchased a sequined gown that became her signature outfit for Winslow High School reunions. The gown is now in the OTM Collections.

Verla taught American and world history, government, and social problems at Winslow High School, where she also served as a sponsor for “just about everything but the football team.” In 1935, she organized the WHS Honor Society, which became a chapter of the National Honor Society in 1946 and was eventually named the “Verla Oare Chapter.”

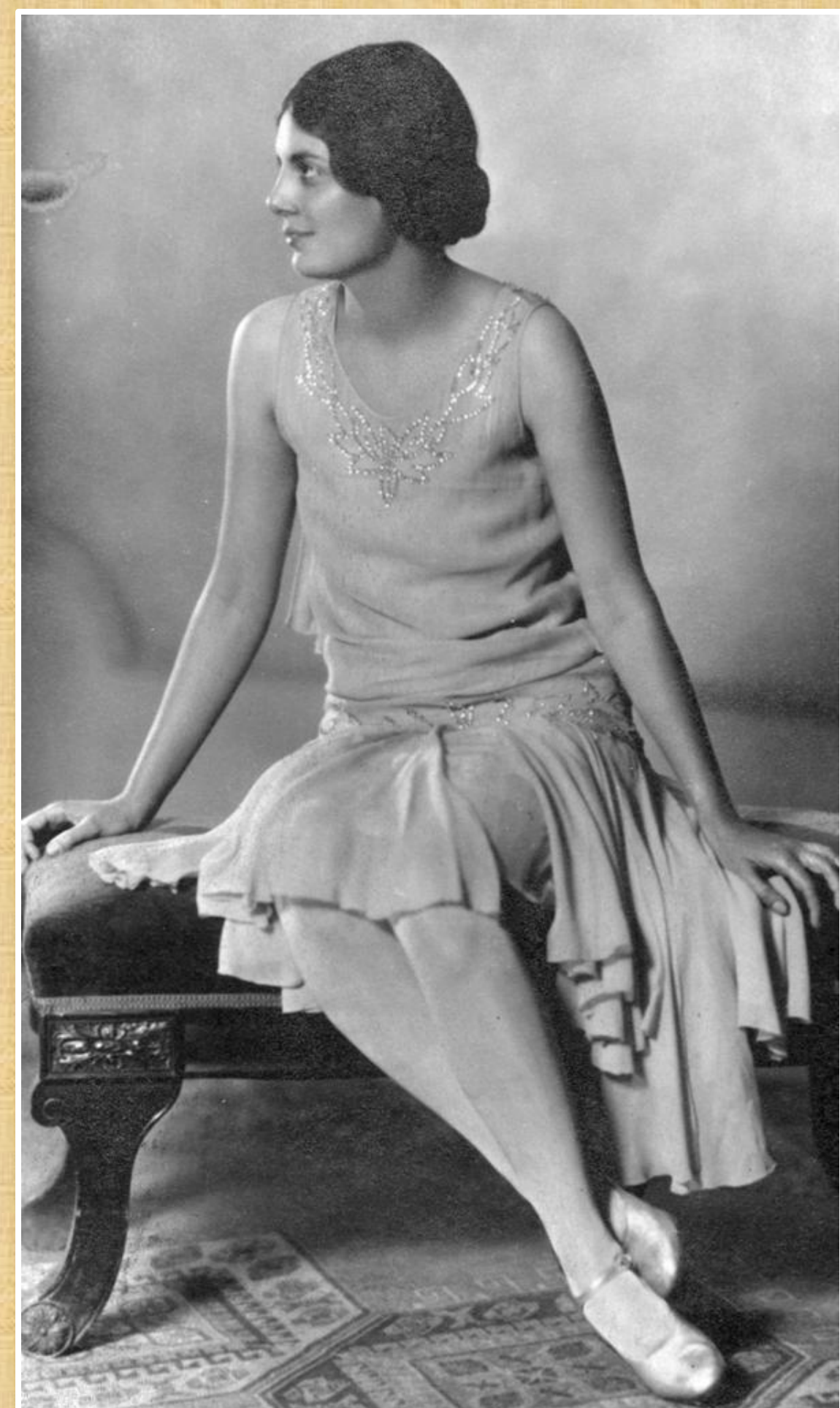
Verla was a member of Delta Kappa Gamma (the honor society for female educators), and she served on the Arizona State Board of Education Association and the Governor’s Advisory Council to Secondary Education. She was named Winslow Teacher of the Year in 1958 and was awarded the Outstanding Service Award from the University of Arizona Alumni Association. She retired in 1970.

Verla was also an active member of the United Methodist Church, Eastern Star, and PEO, for which she chaired of two state conventions.

For 44 years, Verla played a key role in the education of generations of Winslow’s high school students. Said Richard G. Kleindienst, US Attorney General during the Nixon administration, “She was the most important person in my life next to my dad after my mother died . . . She is one of the three or four most influential people in my life.”

Verla moved to Friendship Village in Tempe in 1981, but she came back for a special visit in 1990. When the WHS Class of 1940 was in town celebrating their 50th reunion, the Winslow City Council honored Verla’s positive influence on the lives of her students by declaring May 26, 1990, as “Verla Oare Day.”

Verla passed away on January 26, 1992, in Tempe, Arizona, at the age of 87.



Middle Left: Verla Oare in 1921, when she was 17; Middle Right: Verla Oare in 1932, when she was 28; Bottom: Verla Oare and Bess Switzer Jones at their University of Arizona Class of 1926 Reunion in 1990