HISTORY OF HOMECOMING
AT OHIO NORTHERN
1916 - 2016
Collegiate homecoming celebrations in the United States appear to have begun shortly after 1900 though the exact date and place is not clear. One possibility may be the University of Missouri in 1911 which featured a parade and football game.

As at other schools, there was a strong tie between athletics and homecoming. Homecoming began at ONU in 1916, the year Northern joined the Ohio Athletic Conference.
In the Beginning....

HOMECOMING DAY SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 11TH

"Homecoming Day" is an annual occasion at other universities, and beginning with this year, on Saturday, November 11th, Homecoming Day will be observed at Ohio Northern University. On this date, Wittenberg will play Northern's football eleven, and "Wallop Wittenberg" will be the motto of the day. The football players expect to put this motto across, but they want the students, the faculty, and all alumni, if possible, to be there to boost. And so Homecoming Day has been arranged, so that the graduates may "come home to the old school" once more, that they may breathe Northern's invigorating atmosphere, and see the Orange and Black win a victory on the football gridiron.

J. F. Nolte, business manager of the football team, is at work planning the details for Homecoming Day. Letters are being sent to alumni; and all the important newspapers of Ohio will be provided with press matter giving all the news regarding this occasion.

In this way, it will be possible to reach a large majority of the alumni. The Wittenberg game is the final one of the present season to be played in Ada, and the management desires to have a record-breaking crowd present at this time. Already, letters have been received from alumni stating that they would be present on this date. Students are requested to write to their friends and invite them to visit in Ada on Nov. 11th. Many of the old students have not been in Ada since the Lehr Memorial was erected or the Hill building renovated. As a result, they do not know the marvelous strides Northern has been making, but if they can be persuaded to observe Homecoming Day, not only will they get some of the O. N. U. spirit and pep into their blood, not only will memories of college days be recalled, but Northern will receive an advertisement eminently worthwhile. These alumni will return to their various homes and tell of the remarkable progress Northern has made, and new students will be attracted here.

Homecoming Day is being observed by practically every college in the state this year. The chief attraction is always the football game, to be sure, but other features are arranged, such as reunions, receptions, special programs, etc. Perhaps the various organizations in Ada cooperate with the Athletic board in making Homecoming Day an occasion long to be remembered, by arranging entertainment for the “home-comer.”

“Wallop Wittenberg” is the motto. Saturday, Nov. 11, is the date Northern expects every man to do his duty!

The game of next Saturday will also be a hummer, for Akron University will buck up against Northern on the local gridiron. The standing of Northern and Akron is the same in the conference, and a good game is looked for. “Annihilate Akron” is the motto. —Northern Review.
The central part of the event was the homecoming football game. Northern first played Wittenberg in 1916 and won 25-0.
In July 1925 it was decided that freshman students should wear black and orange caps “...in order to inculcate school spirit in the incoming class.”

This was not necessarily, however, for the entire school year, since the length of time could be decided by a contest held at Homecoming.
Originally, in 1925, the contest was called “the freshman – sophomore scramble,” during which teams from each class were to carry 15 sacks of sand across the university’s athletic field in the shortest time. If the freshmen won, they were allowed to discard their orange and black caps on April 1st.

Over the years, this morphed into the homecoming flagpole rush in which freshmen were challenged to retrieve a cap from the top of a thoroughly-greased flagpole.

It appears that this custom was discontinued by the early 1980’s.
In 1938, Northern added pushmobile races to the homecoming celebrations. Originally held on Main Street, the races were moved onto campus by the 1960’s, possibly due to increasing traffic and higher speed limits.

Between 1943 and 1946 the races were suspended due to WWII.
Homes and stores will be decked for

Friday Night Rally

Members of the football squad and their coaches will occupy seats of honor at the pep rally in Lehr auditorium Friday night at 7:30. Speeches by members of the football squad and faculty members will be followed by a bonfire at the athletic field.

New in the way of entertainment, an interfraternity pushmobile contest is scheduled for Saturday morning, sponsored by the intramural committee. Each fraternity will be represented in a race around the campus.

Open house will be observed at Alumnae hall from 10:00 to 12:00 on Saturday morning. Registration for...
1961 on Main St.
1964 – On South Main St., In front of campus
Race on South Main St.
On West Campus – next to Taft
1987 – Race run behind Lima/ Founders Halls
1935 saw Northern’s first Homecoming queen, Alice Neiswander and her court.

Mayday – celebrated each Spring up to 1972 had a may King but apparently no Queen. The royalty of both events may have been Combined in 1974 with a Homecoming king and queen.
Homecoming royalty – 1953 and 1980’s
1942 – Our last pre-war Queen
Queen and her Court – ca. 1949
Homecoming royalty
1957
Reigning in The Rain
A bonfire at homecoming was first mentioned in the Oct. 1924 issue of the Ada Herald. The last note was mentioned in the 2010 program which stated that a bonfire would be held on Friday between 8-11PM at the west campus pavilion.

It appears to have been replaced by the annual balloon glow and fireworks.
In December 2006, the first balloon glow was attempted at Christmas by Sigma Phi Epsilon to raise money for charity. It was cancelled that year because of a snow storm but was rescheduled in 2007 during Homecoming.

Weather permitting, it was held from 2008 to 2012.
THE END