The May 19, 1949 *Hastings Banner* included the following photo and information: "Memorial Fountain — Pictured above is the memorial fountain which will be dedicated in a ceremony Friday afternoon, May 27, to the former Hastings High School students who made the supreme sacrifice during World War II. Shown at the memorial, which was erected with funds raised by the students themselves, are William Cortright, Theodore Knopf and Paul McKeough ..."

The heads of the drinking fountains at either end of the memorial were removed many years ago, leaving only the pipes exposed.

This stone monument stands as a reminder of the ultimate sacrifice of 31 former Hastings High School students and graduates during World War II.

FILLER, if in color:
The flagpole stands at the opposite end of Johnson Field.

Memorial fountain was emotional project for mason

Students made it possible

John Young was respected in the Hastings area for his skills as a stone mason in the early half of the 20th century. Most of his stonework stands today as a testament to his craftsmanship, the largest of which is St. Rose Catholic Church on South Jefferson Street in Hastings.

Though much more diminutive in size compared to the church, the memorial fountain at the north end of Hastings High School's Johnson Field was a much bigger challenge for Young.

"He always said it was the hardest job he ever did," recalled Young's great-nephew Robert McDonald, "because his son Morton's name was on the plaque."

Morton Young is one of 31 former Hastings High School students who died in World War II and are remembered with the stone monument.

Bill Colant was just out of high school and worked as a mason tender for Young, mixing the mud as Young carefully placed each rock being all-too familiar with its significance.

According to articles in the *Hastings Banner*, the memorial was several years in the making and paid for mainly by students.

"During World War II, everything was recycled. The student council at Hastings High School decided to take on the project of recycling newspaper," said John "Jack" Walton, a Hastings graduate who later served the community as an optometrist and is now retired. "I was in charge of this project for a time. Every Monday morning, students brought bundled newspapers and left then at the south entryway to the gym"

The bundles were stored in a room in the unoccupied "White Building," he said. When the room got full, a semi was brought in and delivered the paper to a recycling center. The student council was paid for these loads, and the money was put into escrow.

"Some of the people memorialized on the bronze plaque undoubtedly helped with the project before entering the service," said Walton.

Johnson Field, part of horse pastures once owned by Hastings industrialist Aben Johnson, was officially dedicated nearly three years prior, Oct. 19, 1945. Hastings lost the game against Charlotte by one point, 7-6, but Bob Branch, now 85, still recalls the dedication of a new field and a flagpole.

Prior to that, football games and track and field events were conducted at the fairgrounds, near where the Kmart Plaza is today.

The daytime memorial fountain dedication in 1949 was a more somber occasion.

The memorial fountain, once backed by evergreens, provided a sometimes quiet place to sit and reflect. The basins for the drinking fountains at either end of the memorial were formed with cement.

It has long since ceased being a drinking fountain, the fountain heads having been removed. The monument itself is often used for group photos, mainly the track and field teams, because of its various elevations.