

# OTEGO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



**Issue 1, 2012**

**June-July 2012**

Monthly Meetings  
3rd Monday April to Nov.  
7 p.m.  
at Harris House  
334 Main St., Otego  
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## OFFICERS

President..... Bill Boerner  
Vice Pres...Irmabelle Sheldon  
Secretary.....Emily Longtin  
Treasurer.....Jan Lloyd

## Meet Ruth Foote

### Growing up on the Farm

Ruth's mother's maiden name was Julia Bohlman. She was born in Germany in 1887. She was 13 when her family landed in New York. They "had people" in Walton so she lived there until she was married.

Ruth's father, John William Hy-mers, was from Delancey, New York. Ruth had one brother, John Wight Hymers and 2 sisters Dorothy and Alta. She was the 3<sup>rd</sup> child

Ruth was born in the family's farmhouse on July 25, 1920. The 350 acre farm was the first one on Flax Island about a mile from Route 7. In fact it is still there. Ruth's dad was a dairy farmer. There were 37 - 40 cows that Ruth would help milk. Some of the other chores were to help take

care of the pigs and chickens and to work in the huge garden

The family had a pair of white horses for a long time named Dolly and Prince. Dolly never lay down. If she fell down, they had a terrible time getting her upright.

Ruth's father sold his milk. He would load up cans of milk on a wagon drawn by mules and would go to Borden's creamery daily in town. Ruth would often ride with him to the creamery.

The kids had a lamb and it would follow any of the four children. Then it would jump up into a rocking chair that was on the front porch and would rock back and forth in the chair. The children had a fit when their dad decided to sell the lamb. But, as Ruth said, "They got over it."

### Ruth's Best Memories of her Mom

Ruth's mom was a fabulous cook. She made a delicious fruit cake. Ruth wanted the recipe and her mom said, "Well Ruth, I use a pinch of this and a pinch of that" Ruth told her mom, "I will have to stand in front of you while you make the cake, so I will know how big your pinches are!" Ruth finally perfected the recipe.

Her mother was a very faithful attendee of the Otego Presbyterian Church - as was the whole family. She was a 28 year mem-



ber of the Grange .

### Ruth's Father

Ruth's father was a meek, mild man and he never got mad. But when he did and had to "speak" to the children, they knew he meant business. Ruth remembered one incident. Each child had to take turns doing the dishes. One day, Ruth's sister, Dorothy, did not want to do the dishes. It so happened that at that moment Ruth's father came into the house to get a glass of water. He said, "What's going on?" Ruth told him that they were not doing the dishes because Dorothy didn't want to do them. Well, he took each one of them by the collar and said, "Whoever's turn it is, the dishes **will** be done." ... and they were.

### Holidays

Ruth's family had wonderful holidays. Ruth's mother's sister,

Olga, her husband and two children would come to share the holidays in Otego. Thanksgiving and Christmas were beautiful occasions. Ruth's family always had a beautiful tree. Ruth's aunt would play the piano and they would sing hymns and Christmas carols.

#### **Family Visits to Delancy**

The family had a car as long Ruth could remember. It was an old Maxwell. They would go to Delancy to visit her dad's mother. However, the children never wanted to go visit her. Grandma Hymers had 4 chairs and the children were expected to sit in them the whole time they were visiting at her house.

Ruth vividly remembered that one time the children got ready to go to their grandmother's house, by washing the car and washing its windows. Ruth's dad chewed tobacco. So, as Ruth remembers, they were on their way. All of a sudden her dad had to spit and because the window was so clean, he thought it was open. So he spit and he left a trail the full length of the window. Ruth said that the kids, sitting in the back seat, wanted to laugh. They kept poking each other, but did not dare to laugh. Ruth's mom was "fit to be tied"! So her dad stopped the car, cleaned the window and nothing was said.

#### **Schooling**

Ruth walked to school in all kinds of weather. It was only a mile from her house. The school provided a wagon to transport the children but the wagon stopped picking anyone up starting at Ruth's house. She walked for

many years until the school finally got a school bus.

Frances (Dieball) Stever and Ruth were the best of friends - even like sisters. They walked to school together. When they were in the sixth grade, one of the boys from their class would walk with them but he was "a pain in the neck". He was always chasing Frances and Ruth. As Ruth told the story, "He would chase us up on a porch and kiss us." So one day, Frances said to me, "Ruth, you knock him down and I'll hold him and we'll pound him." So the next day, he came as usual, bounding up to us, ready to take us down. But, I took him down with my fist. Frances got on top of him and, boy, "We pounded the living daylight out of him." He never bothered us again. In fact he would walk on the opposite side of the road and never even look at us!

In high school, Ruth was a very good basketball and ping pong player. She, Jim St. John and Floyd Favreau would often play ping pong at lunch time. Miss Hill, one of the teachers, "took a shine" to Floyd. She would come to watch them play. One day Miss Hill was sitting on the ping pong table and Ruth picked up the paddle and the ball hit on Miss Hill's backside . . . As punishment, she was given 3 weeks detention. She had to go to the principal's office for her detention. The principal asked her, "Ruth, what exactly did you do to deserve 3 weeks of detention?" When she told him, he said that he thought that she didn't deserve that long a time. Ruth agreed... but she didn't get her detention

but she didn't get her detention time shortened. Ruth graduated from Otego Central School in 1938 in a class of 22.

#### **Working at the Wilbur Boarding House**

After Ruth graduated from high school, she worked at Warren Wilbur's boarding house every summer. (Better known in later years as the Clyde Rutherford Farm.)

Both Ruth and Helen Dieball waitressed at the Boarding House. They would walk to work together at 5 a.m. and would work until 9 at night. Most of the guests were from New York City. They would drive to vacation in Otego. Ruth noted that they gave very good tips. Mrs. Wilbur had a regular menu which people ordered from. Ruth had to learn how to pluck and dissect chickens. One thing that Ruth did not like to do was to put her hand into a jar of water which held eggs.

#### **Donald Foote**

Ruth and Donald went to school together from first grade to her Junior Year. They actually started dating in her senior year. Donald would take Ruth with his sister, Eunice, roller skating in Sidney. Ruth loved to skate and became so good a skater that she could dance on skates. Donald had some competition for Ruth's attention. Another admirer would take Ruth square dancing in Oneonta. Donald and this admirer would compete for a date with Ruth by who could get to her house first to take her

dancing. In the long run, Donald won her affection.

Following graduation, Ruth could have gone to the Oneonta Normal School, but agreed to marry Donald instead. They married in the dining room of her home on November 3, 1941. Reverend Karl Smith, Donald's brother-in-law, performed the ceremony. Ruth's 98 year old great grandmother attended and Ruth still remembers the pieces of tatting that she received from her great grandmother. Her sister Alta was her maid of honor and Harry Bouton was their best man. She and Don went to Watertown and Niagara Falls on their honeymoon.

Donald and Ruth eventually bought their farm on Route 7 and lived there for 30 years. They both worked in "Bendix" for 30 years. Ruth began her ceramic business but cannot remember how it actually got started. She became very well known for her ceramic Christmas trees. People would travel from Binghamton and even Deposit, to buy her trees. She closed the business when her eyes began to bother her. But even after closing it, people would call to see if she was possibly still selling her Christmas trees.

Ruth and Don had two children, Donald Arthur and Marjorie Ann. Don is living in Myrtle Beach, North Carolina. He had a 22 ½ year career in the Air Force. Marjorie died in 2002.

#### Travel and Vacations

Because of their son's career in the air force, Donald and Ruth traveled to Germany two times.

They also visited their son in England, Holland, Clovis, New Mexico and South Dakota.

They retired from Bendix in 1977. For four years, Don and Ruth vacationed in Zephyrhills, Florida. In November they would leave for Florida and stay for 3 months. At first they rented a trailer but eventually bought their own trailer.

#### Otego Activities

Ruth attained a very high office in the Otego Rebecca's. She was a member of the Eastern Star and Don was a Mason. She also enjoyed teaching Vacation Bible School at the Baptist Church for many years.

Unfortunately Don had to go on Dialysis and died from complications in January of 2002.

#### Changes in Otego

When asked what she would consider significant changes in Otego, Ruth said that children are now very anxious to leave Otego. "It is a shame that there is neither a place to shop nor any place to dine out here".

Ruth is an amazing woman who has led a very full life In spite of being 91 years old, and blind, Ruth lives alone in her home in Otego. Ruth has not lost her spunk, enjoyment from her player piano or her wonderful sense of humor.



Found in  
OTEGO WOMEN'S CIVIC  
CLUB COOKBOOK  
of 1974  
Recipe for  
VELVET LUNCH CAKE  
Submitted by Ruth Foote

#### Ingredients:

1 c. sugar  
1 egg  
1/2 c. shortening  
2 Tbsp. molasses  
2 c. flour  
1 c. sour milk  
1 tsp. soda  
1 tsp. cinnamon  
1 tsp. cloves  
1/2 tsp. nutmeg

1. Preheat oven 350° F.
2. Mix ingredients in order given
3. Pour in greased and floured 8 x 8 pan
4. Bake for 30—35 mins.
5. or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean.
6. Cool on a rack

#### UPCOMING MEETINGS OF OTEGO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

**JULY 17 Picnic &  
Profound Thoughts**  
- Lynn Bissell

**AUGUST 20 Mayors of  
Otego—Helen Groves**

**SEPTEMBER 17 Trip to be  
announced**

**OCTOBER 15 —History of  
Historical Society**  
— Emily Longtin

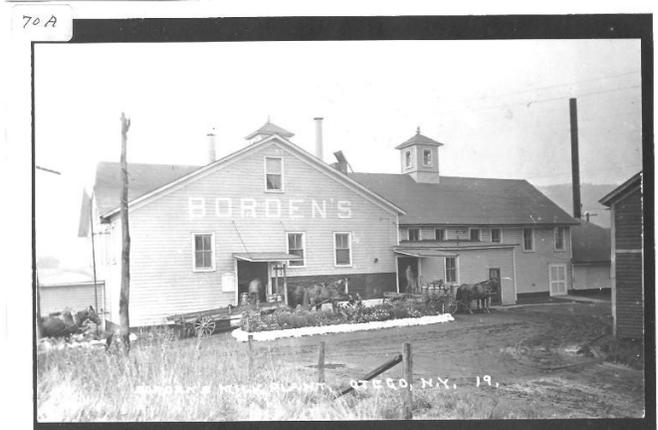
**NOVEMBER—19 Cookie  
Exchange & Program -  
by Helen Groves**

It helps to have a sense of humor as the editor of *The Otego Times* displayed in 1887

As reported in  
**THE OTSEGO FARMER**  
**FEBRUARY 12, 1887**

The editor of the *Otego Times* is the victim of misplaced confidence. His foremen departed between two days, carrying with him money belonging to his employer. The editor describes him thus: "Squires is a sleek young man, in fact quite a *dude*, with red hair, moustache and is about 23 years of age, five feet eight inches tall. A printer by trade, has a sheep-killing-dog expression of countenance. Wore a black suit of clothes (we know, we paid for them) light brown overcoat with velvet collar, had on a black derby hat or fur cap. Any church who wants a singer for their choir will probably find their man in Squires as he runs to singing and getting all out of the country he can before "sloping" for richer fields of dead beatism."

  
**2013**  
**Otego Historical Association**  
**Calendars**  
 will be on sale in October



**DELIVERING CANS OF MILK  
 WITH TEAMS OF HORSES  
 TO BORDEN'S CREAMERY IN OTEGO**

Visit the Historical Association  
 Rooms to see the display of  
 Photos of Old Otego



**ARTHUR BAILEY'S FURNITURE, ICE CREAM  
 AND CONFECTIONARY STORE**

Main Street, Otego

Newsletter prepared by Mary Johnson-Butler