

RURAL VOICES ON THE PATH TO WOMEN'S RIGHTS

TOWN OF ULYSSES

"To the women—the wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters who kept the home fires burning, reared children, nursed the sick and suffered the privations and hardship of pioneer life through all the history of the human race—equal recognition and reward must be given." - Free Press and Sentinel, Vol/ 64 no. 28, Friday, July 12, 1929

EUNICE R. JONES



Eunice Jane Rannings was born in 1908 in Dryden, NY, the daughter of William J. Rannings (1877-1937) of Ithaca and Armenta L. Vosberg of Lodi (1878-1922). The family lived in Dryden where William Rannings owned and operated the village blacksmith shop from 1909 until 1928. The only time the family spent away from the village was a year's stay at Fort Baird, New Mexico when William was a soldier blacksmith at Fort Baird. Eunice was a teenager when her mother passed away.

Eunice spoke lovingly of growing up in the village and especially of the many hours spent reading in the historic Southworth library. She attended Dryden High Schools where she played sports and spent teenage summers waiting tables at a camp on Little Moose Lake in the Adirondacks. After high school Eunice enrolled in the Ithaca City Hospital (Tompkins County Hospital) nursing program and took courses at Cornell to supplement studies. She received a New York State Registered Professional Nurse's License.

While at Cornell, Eunice met and married Ned Madden. She was pregnant with their daughter Susan when Ned was killed in a car accident. She worked as a single mother until 1937 when she married John Paul Jones (1908-1980) of Odessa, New York. Together they bought and extensively renovated a house on Perry City Road where they raised their three children Susan Jane (b.1935), William Ludwick (b.1938), and Deborah Ann (b.1940). She worked at the Ithaca Clinic for Women close to thirty years until 1960 when she became Nurse-Matron at the Tompkins County Home and Farm. Family and friends describe Eunice as a power-house of energy and, like so many women working outside the home, after a day at the office she returned home to take care of house, children and husband. In addition to cleaning, cooking, washing, gardening, and canning during the fifties, she helped her husband establish Jones' Cider Mill, one of the more popular cider mills in the area. Her flower gardens were her joy, and she could be seen in the early morning working in the flowerbeds before going off to her job.

At the start of her nursing career and for thirty-some years, Eunice worked with Ob-Gyn Dr. Edward F. Hall which became the Ithaca Clinic for Women. She was respected and appreciated by her co-workers, sharing bonds with them that remained close even after she retired to California. Patients loved her not only for her skilled nursing techniques, but because she always had time to listen and comfort those going through pregnancy and childbirth. From the beginning of her work with Dr. Hall she provided continuity of patient care with postpartum visits to the homes of new mothers. She spoke to groups on women's health care and conducted classes for women and men who were soon to become parents. Eunice gave expectant fathers an eye-full of the childbirth experience, and it wasn't uncommon to have some men faint while viewing the visual content of the talk.

Working at the clinic, Eunice came in contact with hundreds of women and witnessed the birth of a large percentage of the local population. Walking down the streets of Ithaca, women greeted her lovingly as "Jonsey". Eunice belonged to several nurses' associations and was invited to be a member of Zonta, a national business and professional women's organization (Ithaca 1919-1972) "to honor and encourage high ethical standards in business and profession."

Eunice retired from the Ithaca Clinic for Women when her husband became Manager of the Tompkins County Home and Farm (1960-1973). However, she maintained her nursing license thus becoming Nurse-Matron of the Home. It was a partnership adventure in the field of geriatrics with John Paul running the 300-acre farm while Eunice oversaw most of the direct care of the residents. An August 1968 article in the *Ithaca Journal* titled "Interesting Ithaca Women" covered some of Eunice's early contributions as Matron.

The mostly elderly residents at the Home were often people everyone else had forgotten, and Eunice was determined to make their lives comfortable. With the same energy she had given to her nursing profession, she oversaw client care with a staff of one registered nurse, three practical nurses, and three housekeepers. She worked with local groups in organizing activities and events throughout the year. In 1968 the Jones' were honored for their work by the NYS Association of Homes for the Aged. "Mr. and Mrs. Jones are engaged in a rare and unusual activity," stated an article in the *Ithaca Journal*. "They have taken the Tompkins County Home and Farm and made it into an outstanding example of what fine things can be accomplished in the field of geriatrics if there is inspired leadership, devotion to purpose, and a willingness to work."

Eunice worked outside as well as inside the Home. She revitalized old flower beds and created new ones. On summer days one could view residents and visitors alike seated on benches enjoying the blooms. After twelve years of demanding and exhausting work at the Home, the Jones' retired to California. In Santa Barbara, Eunice spent time in the company of her daughter Susan Loberg and family. Naturally she busied herself gardening. One day she found this note hanging from her garden fence:

"I walk the neighborhood every day with my dog. Each time I pass your house I am (warmed by) aware of how beautiful the grounds frame the house and how much I enjoy looking at it. So thank you for adding to my day. MRF"



HARRIETT JACKSON SWICK

Hattie, as she was known to her Trumansburg contemporaries, was born into the Jackson Family in the Schuyler County town of Catherine on Thanksgiving Day, 1895. Hattie attended local schools in Catherine, married Harry Swick not long after graduating from high school, and raised their four children through the Depression Years. In 1940 she became the Secretary/Treasurer of Grove Cemetery. As such, she became familiar with the complete burial records of the Trumansburg Old Cemetery and the newer Grove Cemetery in her care. That, coupled with a request for ancestral information coming from an aunt living Michigan in 1940, started Hattie on a career as a local genealogist. The expertise she developed and the information she gathered led to her producing her family related document "The House of Swick" in 1973. She continued the work started by genealogist Jesse Howell Finch and together with Carl Fisher organized some 15,000 card entries into the extensive three volume genealogical work, "Between the Lakes Cemeteries" in 1974. The latter work focuses on the cemeteries of Tompkins, Seneca, and Schuyler counties, mapping the location of cemeteries and detailing tombstone names, dates, and narratives from the stones there. Hattie was also very active in the Trumansburg community. She was the Registrar for the Chief Taughannock Chapter of Daughters of the American Revolution starting in the early 1970's. She was instrumental in the founding of the Trumansburg Senior Citizens Club in 1964. It was but a short leap from her expertise in genealogy to becoming an avid local history buff. She researched, wrote, and delivered numerous historical talks to both the Senior Citizens group and the D.A.R. Organization. These papers, along with other writings and commentaries about life in Trumansburg in the 1960's and '70's were collected into a manuscript folio titled "Those Golden Years" in 1975. The genealogical information she gathered is housed today at the Ulysses Historical Society and is the frequently used starting point for area families doing genealogical research. "Hattie" died in 1995. Her grave can be found on Lot 708 in Grove Cemetery where she rests with other members of the Jackson Family.

LYDIA GODFREY SEARS

Lydia's mother, Edna Frost Godfrey, came back from Kauai in the Hawaiian Islands in 1899 in order that Lydia might be born at her mother's family farm in Seneca County. Edna and her husband, Hanes, were both public school teachers in Hawaii at that time. After Lydia's birth the family reunited in Hawaii and then returned to the United States in 1901 and lived for some period of time in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. They finally settled in 1908 on a Seneca County farm just west of Trumansburg. Lydia attended Trumansburg elementary and secondary schools. Contemporaries relate that Lydia was always quite opinionated, abhorred pomposity, and had a quick and biting tongue. It is recalled that she challenged the rules expounded by her Trumansburg high school principle and was expelled as a result. Therefore she spent the next year with relatives in nearby Ovid and graduated (as valedictorian) from the Mynderse Academy. She graduated from Cornell University as an Arts Major in 1921. After college graduation she taught school at Lake George, NY, in New Mexico, and in Fayetteville, Batavia, and Elmira, NY schools. She stopped teaching when she married Dr. Keith Sears in 1930 in Trumansburg. He was some 24 years her senior and Lydia is quoted as telling a friend that as a little girl she sat on his lap as a patient and decided then and there that she would marry him when she grew up. On Dr. Sears retirement in 1942, Lydia went back to teaching. Dr. Sears died in 1947. From 1946 to her own retirement in 1963 Lydia taught third grade classes at Trumansburg Central School. In 1935 she was the driving force in the re-establishment of the Ulysses Philomathic Library in Trumansburg. In conjunction with that effort, she was also instrumental in the establishment of the Costume Bureau which provided period costuming for high school and local amateur theatrical productions. This collection is now housed in the Ulysses Historical Society building. Her interests in books, library science, and history found a happy melding when she gleaned from firsthand documents and local nineteenth and twentieth century newspapers material for her book, "A History of Trumansburg: 1792-1967". She continued to be active in numerous Ulysses civic groups and was named "Outstanding Citizen" by the local Rotary in 1968. She penned a few words in 1977 about growing old that exemplify the quick wit and somewhat sardonic humor she was known for all her life:

"So I like being old; I like to have people help me in and out of places; I like to have people ask my opinion and pretend, at least, to listen to my words of wisdom. I like not doing things I don't want to do. What is aging? A path leading to the best of life."

She died on February 13, 1978. She is interred in Grove Cemetery, Trumansburg, NY, in a grave on Plot 108 next to her husband Keith.

