

# Norwood author spends 40 years preserving a society

By Janenne Irene Froats  
*Courier editor*

The to-do of Norwood lives on, even though Bertha Parsons does not.

The former farmer's wife became a published author two years after her death. Her family diligently worked to finish the book she spent 40 years envisioning and hand writing.

Now, Bertha's lifetime memories of Norwood are preserved and on sale within the pages of "For Old Times' Sake."

The book covers 1866 to 1958. It includes plats of Norwood, Bertha's and other people's recollections, the legend of Lime Ledge Point, poems and an appendix of farmers.

"It was quite a lively town at one time," recalls Bill Parsons, Bertha's husband. "When the sawmill went out, the town went out with it.

"It became a ghost town until the factories came."

Bill and Bertha Parsons both grew up near Norwood. Bill used to hike or ski across the one-mile field that separated his and his wife-to-be's homes. Both of their

fathers were lumberman in the sawmills.

Since financial crisis came to Norwood, long-time families have moved on. Bertha's goal, Bill said,



**Bertha Parsons**

was to preserve the town's history for families who have lost old-time stories with the dying of elderly loved ones. Also, to teach newly arriving families the history of the town.

"By keeping track, the new people can see what it was like before," said Terri Parsons, who moved into the little town when

she married her husband, David Parsons. He is one of Bertha's four sons, the one who is now running the family farm.

When the Parsons were first planting and harvesting their way through the seasons, there was no running water. People made music on family instruments at house parties. Bertha added the sounds of her keyboard to many social gatherings.

"She had a great love and desire for the town," Bill said. "Norwood was No. 1 in her life."

Bertha grew up through years of schooling, community quilting bees, Christmas programs and women's meetings. She spent 40 years collecting and recording hometown history. It was all docu-

mented by the 79-year-old before she left her family and home behind.

Bill and Terri became determined to fulfill a long-time dream.

Two years after her death, with Saturday being the anniversary, the book is on sale at Bridge Street Book Shop. About 80 copies have been sold from either the store or Bill's car.

Money raised through the book is being donated to the Barnard United Methodist Church. That is where Bertha was baptized and attended church throughout her life.

Before her death, Bertha had given her notes to a typist to get the book finished. However, after slow editing and typing, the notes

were retrieved.

Terry went to work, comparing what had been typed with "grandma's" notes.

"I like the way she had said it better," the Boyne City teacher said. "So, I put it back in her own words."

A year-and-a-half and many revisions later, Bertha Parson's dream came out in soft cover. A picture of the windmill in which she played as a child decorates the front of the book.

"What a relief," Bill said. "I feel it's an honor to have accomplished what she wanted.

"Now it can go out to the people and they can read of her experiences. I'm sure she would be proud of the book if she could see it."