



Ruritan

"America's Leading Community Service Organization."

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Dear Fellow Ruritans,

George's Little Book on Ruritan Beginning is another in the series of *George's Little Books*; and factually identifies Ruritan's- Founder, Organizer, Builder. *George's Little Books* are an unofficial series of publications helping Ruritans to better help themselves, their Clubs and their National Organization. Through various committees, the National Board of Directors provides the official training and informational publications for Ruritans, such as the "Club and District Officers' Handbook". *George's Little Books* unofficially supplement the many National publications by providing in-the-trench, thought-provoking support, what it takes beyond the usual published material for Ruritan Clubs, their members and leaders, to better understand who and what they are in Ruritan...to be the best...to be winners!

Read and use *George's Little Books*. They can help you and your fellow Club members be better Ruritans, have a better Ruritan Club, and yes...be a winner!

The best to you in Ruritan.

George

George Winslow
2003 National President

DEDICATION:

George's Little Book on Ruritan Beginning is dedicated to the memory of those early Ruritans who worked during the "Ruritan Beginning" to found, organize and build Ruritan and Ruritan National; and to the living testimony of all Ruritans over the years who demonstrate a caring, sharing, serving commitment to fellowman and community. God Bless Them All.

George's Little Books are published as general information for Ruritan Club Members, and not for any official use.

GEORGE'S LITTLE BOOK RURITAN BEGINNING: FOUNDER ORGANIZER BUILDER

Myth Buster Edition

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*Fellowship
*Goodwill
*Community-
Service



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RURITAN – 1928
RURITAN NATIONAL – 1930
(For Unofficial Use Only)

America's Leading Community Service Organization

RURITAN PUBLISHED BEGINNING

(Norfolk Virginian-Pilot, April 17, 1928)

"Men of Holland, Nansemond County and the vicinity, numbering some of the outstanding men of the community, met last night thirty-three strong, around a banquet table at the Holland Hotel, to discuss the organization of a civic club composed of farmers and men interested in rural occupations, which they hope will be the first of a great chain of similar clubs in small country communities. The name of the club was not decided upon last night, but several names have been suggested as those suitable for such an organization, which is fashioned along the lines of the great civic clubs of the country, and which hopes to be peculiarly useful in farming sections." This club permanently organized at a dinner meeting on May 21. At this meeting, 35 community leaders became Charter Members, and elected E. Taylor Batten, President. The name *Ruritan* was recommended for this new organization and unanimously adopted.

RURITAN NAME

The word *Ruritan* came from the lips of a very rare woman, Miss Daisy Nurney. Today, *Ruritan* is upon the lips of thousands, as it should be. *Ruritan* is two Latin words combined: *ruri*- open country, and *tan*- small town life; interpreted as "pertaining to rural and small town life". Miss Daisy provided a word, but the virtues and ideals for which it stands today is a fitting tribute and benediction to the life of that dedicated public servant, reporter, and poetess. When JJ Gwaltney opened the first meeting of the *Business, Professional Men and Farmers Group* in Holland Va. Miss Daisy covered the proceedings for her newspaper. She was asked to suggest an appropriate name for the group, and coined the word *Ruritan*. Many times Miss Daisy was asked how she came upon the name *Ruritan*. In May 1947, she put her response in writing: "Having been asked how I came upon the name *Ruritan* for the most unusual club I know, I hesitate to answer. In light of almost unbelievable growth of this organization, its spread into other States and the development of its members in civic usefulness, I am forced to believe it was an inspiration. To have had a small part in this great and growing group is something to be proud of, to cherish as one of the fine experiences of one's life in a community." One could find no truer expression of *Ruritan* ideals than is found in Miss Daisy's poem, *Success*:

"That is best which most inspires
And fills the soul with high desires;
Not wealth, but welfare...is success.
Beneficence, life's crown must bring,
For nothing lives but righteousness
And character is everything."

Ruritans everywhere can pay no greater tribute to the lady who gave them their name than to live up to this poem's noble ideal. Miss Daisy's sun has set, but her stars will shine forever.

RURITAN SLOGAN

From the beginning, *Ruritan's* slogan was *Fellowship and Goodwill*, reflecting the intended purpose of those early years. However, it was soon realized that when sharing *Fellowship and Goodwill*, the automatic outcome is *Community Service*. To better reflect this outcome, the slogan was changed to *Fellowship, Goodwill, Community Service*. Over the years, this slogan truly affected thousands of local communities and community people. The order of words in *Fellowship, Goodwill, Community Service* is very important. Beginning with *Fellowship*, each word provides the basis or foundation for the next succeeding word. *Fellowship* brings people together. When community people get together in friendly informal association, have dinner and an enjoyable program, then mutual interests develop, friendships grow, and caring *Fellowship* prevails with a kindly attitude toward friend and fellowman. A willing kindness or generosity grows among these friends and extends outward into community life. This is a willingness to share goodness or *Goodwill*. As caring *Fellowship* continues, the tendency to share *Goodwill* becomes even greater, and the ability to do good matures into good-works for friend and community people. This is *Community Service*. Through *Community Service*, community people develop a more caring *Fellowship*, which causes a greater sharing *Goodwill* that leads to an even more effective *Community Service*. This *Fellowship, Goodwill, Community Service* is a circle initially beginning with caring *Fellowship*. Once begun and not broken, the circle will continue to grow and flourish, impacting many communities and community people.

RURITAN ACTION + RURITAN IDEA

What kind of *Ruritan* member are you? Talented ideas are not enough to achieve goals, you must have energetic action. The business world has more bright, idea/talent people than effective, energy/action people. People who are both are most desirable; but if having to choose between bright idea people or effective action people, then action is the choice. This is not to belittle the need for ideas and creativity, but unless translated into action, it's just dreams. The formula is:

energy action + idea talent = King
energy action + no idea talent = Prince
no energy action + idea talent = Pauper

"Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only." What kind of *Ruritan* are you?

RURITAN BEGINNING: PROLOGUE

Around 1915, school consolidation in Windsor District, Isle of Wight County, Va, began with a new school in Windsor, a brick building accommodating the much larger group of children from several small schools near the town. The new Windsor School received accreditation with departments in Agriculture, Home Economics, Music, Commercial Education. A small school that closed in the consolidation was Line Pine, a 1-room building 3 miles from Windsor.

This closing brought great opposition from one parent, JH Gwaltney, who lived much closer to Line Pine than Windsor. Strongly denouncing the closing, he threatened a law suit for reopening. Friends reasoned with Gwaltney and he agreed to try the "newfangled kid-wagon", transporting his children to the new Windsor School. Eventually, Gwaltney became more than satisfied with the new school. His opposition turned into friendly and cooperative support, even becoming a member of the Windsor District School Board. Often Gwaltney said that if his children had continued at Line Pine, they would have lost interest and probably dropped-out as he did, never completing high school.

Ten of Gwaltney's children graduated from the new school. One was Johnson, better known as Jack or JJ. Jack remembered his father's opposition to school consolidation, then the change to strong support due to greater educational opportunities and other improvements in the community. After graduating from Windsor, JJ attended VPI 1921-25, beginning in engineering then changing to Vocational-Agriculture (Vo-Ag) Teaching. With his degree, JJ accepted a Vo-Ag teaching position at the new consolidated school in Holland Va. As the Vo-Ag Teacher, Gwaltney had two bosses, Holland Principal HV White and District Supervisor of Agriculture Education Tom V. Downing. JJ's responsibilities included teaching agriculture courses for the young prospective farmers, and having winter night-classes for established local farmers to learn new and better farming methods. This teaching position brought JJ Gwaltney into regular contact with the farm youth, their farming fathers and families, and local Holland community businessmen.

RURITAN BEGINNING

By Fall 1927, school consolidation at Holland and holding farmer's livestock wandering into Holland (resulting in fine payments), brought relationships among people in Holland and surrounding farming communities to a breaking point. Remembering the benefits of school consolidation in his own life, and being in direct contact with local farmers, businessmen and community people, JJ Gwaltney realized a mutually agreeable understanding had to be reached. JJ met with his Vo-Ag Advisory Council at the school (farmers and businessmen) about the need to improve understandings and cooperative relationships among people in the outlying areas affected by school consolidation and the Town of Holland. They also discussed the turmoil between rural farmers and town citizens that remained unresolved. JJ spoke with farmers attending his evening classes (resumed December 1927) for their understandings and suggestions to better compromise the volatile situation. Everyone agreed that regularly, scheduled meetings to better understand mutual problems was the best way to resolve differences. Such meetings would also address Gwaltney's desire for local farmers to meet regularly with him throughout the year, not just during the winter months. In March 1928 while Gwaltney met with his Vo-Ag Supervisor Tom Downing, they

talked about Holland Community and the unresolved issues. Could community situations such as this be on-going in other areas of Downing's Vo-Ag District? Gwaltney asked Downing for suggestions. Downing recommended that people in Holland and surrounding areas do need to meet regularly for better understandings, and meetings such as a Rotary Club where people come together in fellowship and goodwill for more cooperative relationships, might be the answer. They also thought that such meetings would be a means to bring local farmers together to consider agriculture and community issues, not limited to just several meetings during the winter months (Ed: Downing had been looking for a method to do this in his Vo-Ag communities, so he was interested in Gwaltney's ideas. If Gwaltney's Advisory Council could organize some type of local group, then Downing could build upon the idea throughout his Vo-Ag District, thereby enhancing the District and his own career goals). Gwaltney discussed the possibility of such monthly meetings with his Advisory Council members and local farmers, getting a very positive response. However Rotary showed no interest in entering rural communities such as Holland, so it was basically up to Gwaltney and his Advisory Council to resolve the situation by organizing a club bringing rural and town's people together to develop better understandings.

It was already well known and proven that in farming communities the Farmers Clubs would come and go, depending on yearly season and farmers' interests. Farmers and Young Farmers Clubs would organize, last for several years, then slowly decline and disappear. Organizing such a club and watch it die could be very disheartening. Those seeing these clubs come and go would not bother with new organizational efforts. The Holland Community needed more than a Farmers Club, it needed a rural community farmers and town's people club. Bringing these two different groups together for fellowship and better understanding was a completely new approach to resolving diverse community differences. JJ Gwaltney shared this idea with his Vo-Ag Advisory Council and several other community men attending the meeting, including Tom Downing. Everyone was very receptive and in agreement to having such a club of fellowship and goodwill working for the betterment of the community. They began detailed planning, even recommending local farmers, businessmen and professional men to join this new club, and invited them to a luncheon meeting scheduled April 16, 1928 (Ed: In those days, "luncheon" referred to size of meal, not time of day). JJ Gwaltney called this Organizational Meeting the "Business, Professional Men and Farmers Group", very much following the naming terminology already established by a national men's group of that time, the "Business and Professional Mens Group". At this Meeting, ET Batten, Director of Tidewater Agricultural Experiment Station and member of Nansemond County School Board, was elected Temporary Chairman, and JT Rawls, Mayor of Holland was elected Temporary Secretary. Both were members of Gwaltney's Advisory Council, and were aware of the

need for this new club to succeed. As is the case with most successes this meeting just didn't happen, it was well planned in advance. Chairman Batten appointed necessary committees to officially organize life into the new club. Committee Chairs and members were appointed to get the maximum and best results to be reported at the next meeting. The men attending this meeting and subsequently almost all Ruritan Members for the first 12-15 years were educated farm owners, not tenant-farmers or share-croppers; business owners, officers, managers, supervisors, not clerks or hourly employees; Doctors, Dentists, Lawyers. This unspoken membership criteria followed along the lines of Rotary membership. The members of the organizational committees were educated, learned men who had in their hands the birth of the new club.

The next meeting, known as **Ruritan's official beginning, was May 21, 1928.** The club organized among the farmers, business and professional men of Holy Neck District and the Town of Holland. The first club officers elected included President ET Batten and Secretary JJ Gwaltney. The 35 new club members adopted the name "Ruritan", derived from Latin: "ruri"- open country, and "tan"- small town life. Immediately following this meeting of the "Ruritan Club of Holland", the Board of Directors held its first Board Meeting.

The club to bring farmers and town's people together was now a reality. However let there be no misunderstanding, it was JJ Gwaltney who knew the community, its people and challenges, who greatly planned then called that first meeting, and who would be the Distinguished Ruritan Member (DRM) for organizing the new Holland Ruritan Club. Tom Downing (Gwaltney's Vo-Ag Supervisor) readily acknowledged that his involvement with organizing the new club was the suggestion for a community club to better resolve community differences; and he admittedly did very little after the Advisory Council Meeting. At no time did Downing claim to be a "Co-Founder" of the Holland Ruritan Club. Since Tom Downing did not live in the Holland area (lived in Suffolk) and was not involved with any local farming or business interests, he could not join the new Club. Downing could visit Holland Ruritan Meetings only when invited by a Club Member. Quickly recognizing the success of this new Club, its ready acceptance by the local community and the other civic Clubs in neighboring Suffolk, and the possibilities of enhancing his career through sharing the Ruritan Idea with other communities in his Vo-Ag District, Tom Downing moved to the Town of Holland and was accepted into membership of Holland Ruritan Club in January 1929.

Following the April 1928 "Organizational Meeting" and the May "Charter Meeting", **June was the first regular Monthly Meeting**, which began years of visitors attending from Eastern Virginia communities and neighboring North Carolina. Visitors were interested in the new Club and some even left with organizational documents to begin their Ruritan Clubs. Such visitors included Courtland, Boykins, Chuckatuck, Windsor, Wakefield, and surely others. What would have been the **2nd Ruritan Club was Courtland in January 1929.**

The "Tidewater News" reports that this Courtland Ruritan Club "recently organized at the county seat, entertained at dinner on Friday evening, January 25, in the dining hall of the Southampton Hotel, a number of visitors from the Ruritan Club of Holland, Virginia....speaker of the evening was JJ Gwaltney, secretary of the Ruritan Club of Holland." **Following this Courtland Ruritan Club, the Boykins Ruritan Club organized. Then sometime before the Wakefield Ruritan Club organized in December 1929, the Courtland Ruritan Club went slip-sliding-away...maybe the Stock Market Crash, who knows (Courtland began anew in 1935 and continues today).** Even though the 1929 Courtland Club had Officers (President Thomas H. Birdsong, Jr, and others) and briefly held Monthly Meetings, Ruritan History doesn't recognize the early Courtland Club; hence **Boykins is officially the second Ruritan Club, followed by Wakefield in December 1929 and Chuckatuck in January 1930.**

In November 1929, Tom Downing began corresponding with Colonel James Speed, Louisville Ky Editor of "Southern Agriculturalist Magazine", about publishing an article on Ruritan. This resulted in Col. Speed visiting Holland January 9, 1930, to address a combined meeting of Holland Ruritan Club and Suffolk Rotary Club. Being greatly impressed with Ruritan, Colonel Speed returned to Kentucky with a copy of Holland Club's Constitution and Bylaws from President JJ Gwaltney. Col Speed intended to "launch a few clubs here in Kentucky during the year." JJ now realized the urgency of a new challenge facing Ruritan. There were 4 Ruritan Clubs in Virginia and now the possibility of Clubs in Kentucky. The Clubs had no unifying, connecting organization. Each Ruritan Club was an independent entity, no connections, no policies.

RURITAN NATIONAL BEGINNING

Because JJ Gwaltney had organized the first Ruritan Club and was generally involved in organizing the other 3 Ruritan Clubs, Ruritan was JJ Gwaltney's. So Gwaltney called a meeting of **the 4 Ruritan Clubs** for February 26, 1930, "to ascertain the opinion of the 4 Clubs now organized as to the advisability of obtaining a State Charter, adopting a constitution, and forming clubs in the State of Virginia and in other States." At this Meeting, JJ Gwaltney (Holland) is elected Temporary Chairman and WN Rippey (Chuckatuck) is elected Temporary Secretary. A second Meeting of Ruritan Clubs is held March 19, including the new Windsor Club. During the Meeting, "National" is used for first time. After committee reports, the final business provides empowerment action for the new unifying organization to become Ruritan National. From this meeting and formal approval of the Ruritan Clubs, Ruritan National becomes a reality. JJ Gwaltney is the first Secretary of Ruritan National.

Before Virginia issues a Charter of Incorporation to the new Ruritan National on July 7, 1930, the Ruritan Club of Spencer County, Ky organizes on May 27, 1930 (known as Taylorsville Club). For several years this Kentucky Club is on the list of Ruritan Clubs. However the Club never affiliates with

Ruritan National, so it is eventually dropped and not recognized as a Ruritan Club. (Ed: Taylorsville Club becomes a tremendous asset in Spencer County. Its service becomes a front page standard in the local newspaper, probably the most successful Ruritan Club for many years, and grows to become the 3rd largest Ruritan Club; all of this is unknown to Ruritan National.) With Taylorsville Club organizing May 27, Ruritan grows beyond Virginia. Because Ruritan National officially charters two months later, and Taylorsville never affiliates with Ruritan National, then National does not grow beyond Virginia until Sunbury NC Club in 1935. Several months after Ruritan receives its State Charter, two more "Ruritan" Clubs organize in Kentucky. These Clubs never affiliate with Ruritan National, so they are not official Ruritan Clubs.

Initially, the Ruritan Officer Nominating Committee asked ET Batten of the 1st Ruritan Club (Holland) to be the National President. Batten declined due to possible job relocation. Being the first President or "Organizing President" of the very successful 1st Ruritan Club, Batten knew that organizing and leading the new Ruritan National would take a tremendous effort and much dedication to both the position and the Organization. The Committee then approached Dr. Bland, President of the 2nd Ruritan Club (Boykins) to be the National President. Dr. Bland accepted and became the first President of Ruritan National. However due to being the Boykins Community Physician or other reasons, he was unavailable to attend many National Meetings. Responsibility to organize and lead Ruritan fell greatly on the National Secretary JJ Gwaltney (Holland) and the 1st Vice President JR Kirk (Chuckatuck). Unknowingly, Gwaltney was amassing a power within Ruritan that would place him in direct conflict with the one who had a greater vision for Ruritan, the one becoming the great Ruritan Missionary, the Ruritan Builder, Tom Downing.

At that time there was no misunderstanding, Ruritan was JJ Gwaltney's. Even though Tom Downing was becoming the great Ruritan Builder by successfully spreading Ruritan into Eastern Virginia communities, JJ Gwaltney was above Tom Downing in Ruritan. Gwaltney was the Ruritan Founder and National Secretary. In real life, in the business of making a living, Tom Downing was above JJ Gwaltney. Downing was Gwaltney's Supervisor, his boss. Therein lay the problem, Ruritan-life and real-life. A clash was coming. Tom reduced any problems on the Club level by moving from Holland to Ivor in 1930, and joining the new Ivor Ruritan Club. However Tom Downing better understood the larger picture, the greater vision for a National Organization. JJ Gwaltney had a good understanding of Ruritan locally and regionally, but Tom Downing had a better understanding of a Ruritan nationally. Downing had the talent, the experience, the connections and the drive to bring about a truly National Organization. With time, with years, JJ Gwaltney could possibly develop such character, but Ruritan National needed the right person with the right-stuff, right now. What to do!

RURITAN TORCH IS PASSED

Yes, what to do. Whether it was man's contrivance or God's intervention, the whisper went out that Vo-Ag teaching positions in Nansemond County were being eliminated to better control school budgets during the Depression. (Ed: A rural agricultural county controlling school budgets by eliminating the greatest educational asset: not Music, but Agriculture?) Holland School Principal HV White passed the word to JJ Gwaltney. As the District Vo-Ag Supervisor for Eastern Va, which included Nansemond County, Tom Downing found a Vo-Ag teaching position open in Emporia Va. Gwaltney was a family man, this was the Great Depression economy, his position at Holland was being eliminated. Gwaltney took the job in Emporia. The Gwaltney family moved to Emporia, but Gwaltney's was apparently the only move. Downing never writes that any of the other Vo-Ag Teachers in Nansemond County lose their jobs, only JJ Gwaltney. Neither does Downing write of finding teaching positions for any of the other Vo-Ag Teachers in the County, only the position for Gwaltney. After JJ Gwaltney moved to Emporia, common sense prevailed and the elimination of Vo-Ag teaching positions in Nansemond County was reversed. The open Vo-Ag teaching position in Holland School was filled.

With his move to Emporia, Gwaltney's intent might have been to stay active as National Secretary because he took with him Ruritan National's Official Records. Eventually Gwaltney realized the intent for the move. The Ruritan Torch was being passed. The Ruritan Vision was passing from JJ Gwaltney the Ruritan Founder, to Tom Downing the Ruritan Builder. The change was necessary for a greater Ruritan. Throughout all of this, Gwaltney's outward attitude remained gentlemanly and very silent about the intervening circumstances of his move to Emporia. However when Gwaltney moved from Holland to Emporia, he had to leave the Holland Ruritan Club, the Club he had founded; and eventually his ties with Ruritan National were severed. All of which was probably not as he had planned in the move to Emporia since he still had in his possession the official Records of Ruritan National (another story). In the years following, JJ Gwaltney did not challenge Tom Downing's announced claim to "Co-Founder" of Ruritan. This claim bubbled and boiled in the background until the 1961 Ruritan National President finally appointed a National Committee, Chaired by Past National President Frank Kellam, to better resolve the question..."Who founded Ruritan."

THE FOUNDER / THE BUILDER

If Distinguished Ruritan Member (DRM) recognition had been given from Ruritan's beginning, then JJ Gwaltney would receive the DRM for founding the Holland Ruritan Club and also the DRM for founding Ruritan National. Beyond that, the recognition for going-forth to spread the Ruritan Idea and to successfully build Ruritan National belongs to the great "Ruritan Builder", Tom Downing. However the line has been crossed by attempting to define

Tom Downing as the "Co-Founder" of Holland Club in 1928 and Ruritan National in 1930. None of this can be supported by facts, hence false. The premise of Gwaltney and Downing as Ruritan "Co-Founders" has developed into a very misleading arrangement. Without Downing, Gwaltney would have still founded "Ruritan". Without Gwaltney, there would be no Ruritan.

In 1928 when the "Business, Professional Men and Farmers Group" was planned then became the first Ruritan Club, the term "Co-Founder" was never used because Ruritan had only one Founder, JJ Gwaltney. During 1928 as the Ruritan Club of Holland grew into the very successful Club for fellowship and goodwill in the rural Holland community, the term "Co-Founder" was never used because Ruritan had only one Founder, JJ Gwaltney. In 1929 when Tom Downing joined the Holland Ruritan Club, and throughout his time as a member of the Club, the term "Co-Founder" was never used because Ruritan had only one Founder, JJ Gwaltney. In 1930 when JJ Gwaltney called the Ruritan Clubs together to organize the unifying body for all Ruritan Clubs, Ruritan National, the term "Co-Founder" was never used because Ruritan and Ruritan National had only one Founder, JJ Gwaltney. Only after Gwaltney's teaching position in Holland was "eliminated" and he was removed from Ruritan in the move to Emporia Va without any connections to Holland, only in the distant years after this move was the term "Co-Founder" embraced by Tom Downing. The term "Co-Founder" never existed while Gwaltney was in Ruritan because Ruritan had only one Founder, JJ Gwaltney. The term "Co-Founder" was miscoined years later to provide a greater importance of Tom Downing to Ruritan in spreading and Building the Ruritan Idea. **If Downing had not been the great Missionary and "Ruritan Builder" in spreading the Ruritan Idea, he would not have any significant importance in Ruritan History.** For spreading the Ruritan Idea on the national level, Downing is the great "Ruritan Builder" and should be recognized as such, not a mislabeled Ruritan "Co-Founder". **Without facts and evidence, history becomes legend. Without truth and knowledge, legend becomes myth. With time, myth becomes the new history. Such is Ruritan "Co-Founder".**

ONE-FOUNDER EVIDENCE

*01/16/34 Petersburg Va "Progressive-Index" Newspaper article on Ruritan founding. Through separate interviews with JJ Gwaltney and Tom Downing, the Southside Editor writes: "Mr. Downing...declared that to Mr. Gwaltney should go the full credit....Mr. Gwaltney told your correspondent...it was Mr. Downing who suggested the idea." The Editor continues "Whichever of the two men actually made the suggestion first, little matters. **It is now a matter of record that the suggestion bore fruit and to Mr. Gwaltney undoubtedly goes the larger share of the credit for the establishment of that first club.**"

*06/47 Ruritan Magazine, edited by Tom Downing, "Fixing the Facts of Ruritan's Beginning": **"Mr Gwaltney, the first National Secretary and the first**

Secretary of the Holland Club.... As full time teacher in the Holland School, he **and several other citizens of the community conceived the idea of a civic club for the small town and country, resulting in the organization of the Holland Club** and leading to the formation of the federation of the clubs into Ruritan National at Franklin, Virginia...." (Ed: **Tom Downing was not a citizen of the community when Holland Club organized.**)

*07/12/48 Norfolk Virginian-Pilot- "Ruritan Pays First Tribute to Originator": "The father of Ruritan National came back home tonight to receive honors from the club he founded 20 years ago...the visitor was J. J. Gwaltney.... E. T. Batten...a charter member...told how Gwaltney used to hold winter night meetings of farmers to talk over their problems and how the teacher seized on a suggestion that a group be formed to continue the discussions the year round. Acting on his idea, Gwaltney called a dinner meeting of farmers and businessmen and a club was formed.... For this achievement, Gwaltney got a surprise gift...a silver bowl, inscribed thus: **'J. J. Gwaltney, the Originator of the Ruritan Idea, 1928, presented by the Mother Club, 1948'.**"

*1950 "History of Ruritan National" by Bruce Kent, C. E. Myers and Joe Byrum (published by Ruritan National): "When J. J. Gwaltney...was asked about the founding of the Mother Club, he replied that it grew out of discussions held with his Vo-Ag Advisory Council at the Holland High School.... Tom Downing...verifies the correctness of this point of view.... It was perfectly natural that Gwaltney, the Vo-Ag Teacher, should constantly consult, advise and talk over his plans with his District Supervisor, Downing. Therefore, although **Tom Downing** did not become a member of Ruritan until almost a year after its founding, when he moved to Holland, the records show that he was in the background from the beginning and that he **was destined to play as important a role in the growth and expansion of Ruritan as Gwaltney played in the founding of the organization....** J. J. Gwaltney called the first meeting which resulted in the Club at Holland and also called the meeting of the first four clubs at Franklin, Va. where the organization of Ruritan National was consummated. Tom V. Downing must be given credit for being the all time great Ruritan Missionary who carried the Ruritan Idea to practically every community.... **Gwaltney, as Vo-Ag Teacher, was the one who was in a position to organize the Mother Club. Downing, as District Supervisor, was the one who was in a position to spread the idea to other communities.**"

*1950 "Ruritan's Beginning" by Tom Downing: **"To Gwaltney should go full credit for directing the organization of the Holland Club. There was very little I did after the meeting of the Advisory Council."** (Ed: March 1928 Council Meeting. By Downing's own declaration, he was not active in Holland Ruritan Club's founding, ie April "Organizational Meeting", May "Charter Meeting", and Club's first year. By 1929, the Holland Club was firmly founded, organized, and successful before Tom Downing joined.)

***1951** The 1950 "History of Ruritan National" was presented to the 1951 Ruritan National Convention and "received with a standing ovation and adopted as the official history of the organization". This official action by the Delegates, the highest authority in Ruritan, settled the Founder question by giving proper credit to Gwaltney "in the founding of the organization" (The Founder), and to Downing "in the growth and expansion of Ruritan" (The Builder). (Ed: This official action by Ruritan's highest authority is still in effect today: Gwaltney the Founder and Downing the Builder.)

***1961-64** Ruritan History Committee to determine the Founders of Ruritan, Chaired by Past National President Frank Kellam, met with parties concerned then presented a preliminary report in August 1963 to the National Board of Directors. Arising from this report, JJ Gwaltney was offered Honorary Life Membership on the Ruritan National Board. Gwaltney accepted this Honorary Life Membership subject to a **verification letter** being signed by the remaining Charter Members of the Holland Club that Gwaltney "founded the first Ruritan Club". **The Charter Members knew that Gwaltney was the only Founder of Ruritan. The 11 signed the letter and submitted it as evidence for JJ Gwaltney being the Founder of Ruritan.** (Ed: Even today, Holland Ruritan Club acknowledges JJ Gwaltney as its only Founder, no Co-Founders.)

***01/13/64** Tom Downing's letter to History Committee Chair Frank Kellam: **"I do not want in any way to take any credit from Mr. Gwaltney for the good job he did in organizing the Holland Ruritan Club. Without his efforts, there would not have been such a club started at Holland. I have thought for a good many years that Ruritan National should give him some kind of an award for the work he did."** (Ed: Downing writes this letter after hearing the History Committee's preliminary report. **Downing affirms that Gwaltney organized the Holland Club, hence founded Ruritan.** In no way should Downing's statement diminish his importance to Ruritan as the "Great Ruritan Builder".)

***05/08/98** Nancy G. Dennis (JJ Gwaltney's daughter) letter to Ruritan's 70th Anniversary Committee: "Tom Downing's name has been linked to Dad's for many years. Mr. Downing certainly deserves the credit for taking the idea to a fine, national level organization. Dad said many times that the type of work to do that on a national level was not where his interest was. His was definitely on a more grass roots, farmer-businessman, educational level. It was a puzzle to my mother and also to my sister and me why the facts continue to be blurred. **It was Dad's idea, he started the Club in Holland and Tom Downing carried the idea to a national level.**"

***1928-Todate** No collaborative factual evidence is found supporting Tom Downing as Ruritan Co-Founder; only evidence as Ruritan Builder.

RURITAN HISTORY COMMITTEE

The 1950 "History of Ruritan National" by Kent, Myers, Byrum clearly relates that Gwaltney founded the Mother Club and Downing spread the Ruritan Idea to other communities. Ruritan National acknowledged and published this factual history, but it was not widely distributed. Over the years as Downing continued to share "his story" of Ruritan Beginning, more Ruritans believed that he must be a "Co-Founder". Downing fervently embraced this Ruritan "Co-Founder" recognition. **Thus began the Ruritan "Co-Founder" myth.**

In 1961 the Ruritan National President appointed a special Ruritan History Committee, Chaired by Past National President Frank Kellam, and tasked to determine who founded Ruritan, either One-Founder Gwaltney or Co-Founders Gwaltney and Downing. Committee Chair Kellam wrote letters to early Ruritans who might have any knowledge of the Ruritan Beginning. Through these letters and personal visits, Kellam and the Committee organized a Founder Evidence File which grew in size and renown. The Committee was reappointed annually. By early 1963, the National President requested that the Committee give a report to the National Board of Directors. Chair Kellam agreed to a preliminary report, but preferred more time before giving a final report. Kellam knew that the Committee file contained sufficient evidence to report who founded Ruritan, and hoped that a preliminary report would provide just enough "pressure" to get that one critical evidence letter still missing. Chair Kellam gave a preliminary report to the National Board of Directors in August 1963 at which time JJ Gwaltney was offered Honorary Life Membership on the Board. National Secretary Tom Downing heard this report. The decision was made that sufficient evidence existed for the Committee to make a final report to the National Board and the 1964 National Convention. There was even talk that this Convention might be "The Jack Gwaltney Convention". So where was Downing in all of this? That was the "pressure" Frank Kellam needed. Days before the Convention, and to not be left behind during the Gwaltney Recognition, Tom Downing wrote a letter on January 13 to Committee Chair Kellam affirming that Jack Gwaltney founded the Holland Ruritan Club, and that Ruritan National should give Gwaltney an award for the work he did. This was the missing evidence letter Kellam wanted, an affirmation from Tom Downing that Jack Gwaltney founded the Holland Club, hence founded Ruritan. The Founder Evidence File was now complete and ready for the Committee's official report to the National Board and the National Convention. Gwaltney would be recognized and honored. However just before the Convention, Gwaltney became seriously ill; he could not attend and be personally honored. It is not known what agreements were made among Ruritan National Leaders, but all "Jack Gwaltney" announcements and honors were held in abeyance: no History Committee report to the National Board and the National Convention, no recognition without Jack Gwaltney being present. After the Convention, Gwaltney died.

The 1964 Ruritan National Convention brought a new National President and a most important and demanding agenda of locating, designing, funding and building a new National Office. This new National President also had his own "personal agenda" in Ruritan, for which he needed "unequivocal support" from Tom Downing and the Ruritan National Leadership. Jack Gwaltney was dead. There was no "pressing-need" for this National President to request an official report on who founded Ruritan, so the History Committee became dormant. Tom Downing remained as Ruritan "Co-Founder". By the end of the year, the History Committee was no more. With no formal report, the Committee's Evidence File including Tom Downing's letter, remained in Frank Kellam's possession. Only Tom Downing and Frank Kellam knew of Downing's letter affirming Jack Gwaltney as the only Founder of Holland Ruritan Club, hence only Founder of Ruritan. Frank Kellam knew the power contained in the Founder Evidence File. It proved without question that Gwaltney was Ruritan's only Founder, no "Co-Founders". Even though Ruritan National's 1950 publication "History of Ruritan National" clearly acknowledged that Ruritan had one Founder, JJ Gwaltney, and one Great Ruritan Missionary, Tom Downing, many Ruritans were not aware of this limited publication. And now, the Ruritan History Committee and its Founder Evidence File were also "history". Over the years and in the far background, Frank Kellam did use the power of the Ruritan Founder Evidence File to help bring more sensible solutions to challenges facing Ruritan.

THE ORGANIZER

Between Gwaltney the Founder and Downing the Builder, there is one person very important to recognizing both men for their Ruritan successes. Without this person being successful in his Ruritan position, then the founding would have been for naught and there would not have been a Ruritan National to build. That one person is 1st President of the 1st Ruritan Club, ET Batten.

The success of practically any human endeavor rises and falls on leadership. To be successful, this new idea of farmers and town's people club must have the right leader. Jack Gwaltney is just 3 years out of college and young and unproven, but respected by local farmers and merchants because he is a local farm boy (neighboring Isle of Wight County). He is experienced with his Vo-Ag Advisory Council, Vo-Ag Classes, and evening Farmers Classes; however Gwaltney has no experience with any civic or community club such as Rotary or Lions, and has no organized leadership experience in the community. Tom Downing would be a good leader, but not being a local farmer nor having any local business connections, he cannot join the Holland Ruritan Club; and by not living in the Holland community he is an unknown, so people do not know nor have any reason to respect Tom Downing's abilities. Holland School Principal HV White probably has the credentials to lead the new Club, but community school consolidation would not make him a favored choice. The

right person would be the one respected by farmers and town's people alike, be learned and well conversant, have leadership characteristics and managerial skills, be organized, demonstrate a positive attitude to deal with people on all levels, and be very much acquainted with running community/civic club activities to organize the new Club. There is such a person in the community and he is part of a "Lucky set-up" arranged by Divine Providence (a phrase Tom Downing refers to in later years). That person is E. Taylor Batten. He is Supervisor of the Tidewater Agricultural Experiment Station, member of Gwaltney's Vo-Ag Advisory Council, manager-leader with positive attitude, member of Suffolk Rotary Club, local farmer, and greatly respected by all throughout the community. ET Batten agreed to Chair the April 1928 Organizational Meeting of this new Group. He led the planning; he chose and appointed the committees; and then he followed through to ensure that this new "Business, Professional Men and Farmers Group" organized successfully. In May 1928, ET Batten was elected the 1st President of the 1st Ruritan Club, Holland Ruritan Club. His job was now to lead fellow Ruritans in organizing a most successful first Ruritan Club.

And what a success! Under President Batten's leadership and with support of fellow club members, the Holland Ruritan Club enjoyed interesting meetings; which included community topics, entertaining programs or appropriate speakers, and delicious luncheons prepared by local Ladies Groups. This new Ruritan Club of Holland brought fellowship and goodwill among men in the rural community, and attracted many invited guests from far and wide, even neighboring North Carolina. Several visitors left the meetings with copies of the Constitution and Bylaws to begin their own Ruritan Clubs. Such was the success of this new rural community club, the Ruritan Club of Holland; and the success of E. Taylor Batten, its first President and Chief Organizer.

TWO MEN OR THREE

Is it two men or three who should receive Ruritan National recognition for the "Ruritan Beginning": Founder- JJ Gwaltney; Organizer- ET Batten; and Builder- TV Downing? If any of these three had failed, all would have failed; and Ruritan would have failed, existing only in the annals of history.

RURITAN BEGINNING: EPILOGUE

Facts concerning the "Ruritan Beginning" have been clearly presented. Many people in the Holland Community were involved with "founding" the Holland Ruritan Club, hence possible "Co-Founders". If sharing an idea defines "Co-Founder", then Vo-Ag Advisory Council members would be "Co-Founders" because the Members and Chair ET Holland clearly discussed and acted on the idea of a community club. Tom Downing initially reported this, then silence. Similarly Tom Downing also shared the idea for a community club, but could not participate as did the Advisory Council because he was an unknown and

not part of the Holland Community. Holland Ruritans and Suffolk Rotarians ET Batten and HV White would be "Co-Founders" because they helped to organize the Ruritan Idea along the lines of Rotary. And among all of the possible Ruritan "Co-Founders", only ET Batten who served on the Advisory Council before and during the organizational planning, served as Temporary Chairman of the founding Group, served diligently as the 1st-year President to found and organize the Holland Ruritan Club, **only ET Batten had sufficient collaborative evidence to factually claim any possible ownership in Ruritan "Co-Founder"**. However with various "Co-Founders", there must be one Founder above them all. That one Founder is JJ Gwaltney. In his modesty, Gwaltney didn't show any concern when many years after the "Ruritan Beginning", Tom Downing announced an unsupported claim to co-ownership in Ruritan's founding. It wasn't until Ruritan placed a greater importance on the "founding" question by appointing a History Committee, Chaired by a distinguished Past National President, to determine "Who founded Ruritan". That got Gwaltney's attention. The Committee's report to the National Board resulted in Gwaltney being offered Honorary Life Membership on the National Board of Directors. Gwaltney accepted subject to the subsequent Holland Club Charter Members' signed **Verification Letter** affirming Gwaltney as sole Founder of Ruritan. Then the greatest evidence received, **Tom Downing's letter in 1964 acknowledging JJ Gwaltney as the only Founder**, which supported Ruritan's One-Founder History, a fact: (1) officially published by Ruritan National 14 years earlier in 1950 "History of Ruritan National"; and (2) acknowledged in Tom Downing's 1950 article "Ruritan's Beginning"; and (3) officially acknowledged and adopted by Club Delegates at the 1951 Ruritan National Convention. Just days before the Committee's report to the 1964 National Convention, Gwaltney becomes ill; within weeks, he dies. No "Founder" announcements are issued. Jack Gwaltney is dead; Ruritan's myth continues with Tom Downing as Ruritan "Co-Founder". **TODAY THE MYTH IS BUSTED!** All is now public to honor those most responsible for the "Ruritan Beginning": Founder- JJ Gwaltney; Organizer- ET Batten; Builder- TV Downing.

RURITAN SUCCESS / SUCCESSOR

Success just doesn't happen. Every success has a Successor, the one that causes the success. That Successor may be man, nature, Divine Providence. After Gwaltney is removed from Ruritan in the move to Emporia Va, Downing is the next person in the "Ruritan Beginning" to become Ruritan's Successor. It is through Downing's great abilities, talents and major efforts that Ruritan grows into a truly National Organization. However, Tom Downing never prepares another to follow him as the Ruritan Successor. Since Tom Downing's passing, no other person is acknowledged to be the new Ruritan Successor. With no Successor, who causes or brings success to Ruritan?

WHY RURITAN SUCCESS

Ruritan is the Club for the rural community. No other clubs existed to bring farmers and town's people together in fellowship and goodwill for the benefit of the rural community. Such was the strength and success of Ruritan. Why the rural community; what was so special about rural communities that brought such great success to Ruritan? The answer lay in the people. The strength of the rural community is the people, and the strength of the rural people is the Church. Rural communities are built around the Church. The "History of Ruritan National" by Kent, Myers, Byrum, better explains the answer. "The ideals of RURITAN are the simple virtues of Christian living on the COMMUNITY level.... Ruritan is a divinely inspired program, more effective and more vital than its founders realized, or the mortal efforts of its members, alone, could produce.... RURITAN is Christian ideals worded in 20th century American language to fit the American Way of Country Life and geared to perform worthy service in Rural America today and tomorrow. RURITAN is a tried and proven method, a scientific and divine solution to many civic, social, economic and spiritual problems of the more abundant country life." Ruritan, and its fellowship and goodwill, was surely arranged by Divine Providence through the Founding...Organizing...Building. Any attempt to change or deny this basic foundation of "America's Leading Community Service Organization", dilutes the strength, the effectiveness and the well-being of America's Ruritan Clubs. The success of Ruritan lay in the character and values of rural people, and the character and values of rural people lay in the rural community Church. Such was Ruritan's success. Amen

RURITAN BEGINNING RURITAN NATIONAL NEWS - 1930

Ruritan National- 1930 news

Year begins with Chuckatuck Ruritan Club organizing in January, joining the 3 existing Clubs: Holland-1928, Boykins-1929, Wakefield-1929. Inquiries from nearby communities together with the success of organizing Ruritan Clubs, create a need for some kind of plan uniting all Ruritan Clubs. To organize this unity, a joint meeting of Clubs is held Feb 26, followed by a second meeting March 19, which includes the new Windsor Club. The result is a unifying organization named "Ruritan National", chartered on July 7 by the Commonwealth of Virginia. As Ruritan's success spreads, Ivor and Surry Clubs organize. The first Ruritan Club outside Va organizes May 27 in Taylorsville Kentucky, but never affiliates with Ruritan National. Before the year ends, these Ruritan Clubs demonstrate the common good that community people can provide through unselfish and public-spirited cooperation.

Ruritan National- then/now (excludes Ruri-Teen)	1930	2013
Charter Club Membership - minimum.....	20.....	16
New Club Charter Fee.....	\$ 10.....	\$50
New Member Initiation Fee.....	\$ 1.....	\$ 5
National Dues - Annual.....	\$0.50.....	\$44
New Clubs Organized.....	4.....	5
Ruritan Natl - total clubs.....	7.....	1064
Ruritan Natl - total members.....	207.....	27126

Ruritan National- 1930 winners circle

Ruritan Founder.....	JJ Gwaltney
Ruritan Organizer (1 st Club).....	ET Batten
Ruritan Builder.....	TV Downing
National President (Boykins).....	Dr JM Bland
National 1 st Vice President (Chuckatuck).....	JR Kirk
National 2 nd Vice President (Wakefield).....	WT Bain
National Secretary (Holland).....	JJ Gwaltney
National Treasurer (Chuckatuck).....	FB Everwine

Ruritan National- the days of

With a new Farm Bill, income taxes reduced, over one million Model A Fords built in past 2 years, most US leaders still insist that economy is basically sound. However many investors lose fortunes in 1929 Stock Market crash, unemployment rises above 7 million, and a terrible drought causes much suffering in farm communities; the working people are in a downwardly spiraling economic depression. Although Ruritan offers the most promising means for rural people to meet in the spirit of fellowship and goodwill in planning and working for better tomorrows, challenging times lie ahead.

Prepared for you by George Winslow

Holland Ruritan Club Charter Members' Verification Letter Affirming JJ Gwaltney As Only Club Founder

Holland, Virginia
December 1963

To the Ruritan National History Committee:

In the fall of 1927, the relationship of the people in the surrounding communities of Holland and the people of Holland were at a breaking point over the consolidation of schools and the penning of livestock for which the payment of fines for their release was required. Under these conditions, a young vocational agriculture instructor, J. J. Gwaltney, realized something had to be done, so he began to talk with the fathers of his vo-ag students and farm leaders about setting down across the table with business leaders of Holland to discuss mutual problems. He worked quietly and diligently all fall and winter trying to persuade these groups to get together. It took until April 1928 to accomplish this. Ruritan history from this point on is recorded in the minutes.

We, the undersigned Charter Members of the first Ruritan Club, wish to verify the above statements as being true and correct and for the record we wish to state without reservation that the Ruritan idea was conceived in the mind of J. J. Gwaltney in the fall of 1927 and continued to develop until he formally founded the first Ruritan Club in May 1928.

Respectfully submitted,

H. V. White

H. V. White

W. E. Beale

W. E. Beale

J. D. Rawles

J. D. Rawles

Lloyd H. Gardner

Lloyd H. Gardner

P. C. Holland

P. C. Holland

W. C. Hook

J. J. Gwaltney

J. J. Gwaltney

W. W. Darden

W. W. Darden

H. L. Worrell, Sr.

H. L. Worrell, Sr.

Howard E. Byrd

Howard E. Byrd

B. W. Council

B. W. Council

Howard Luke