



Agriculture has been and continues to be a major part of life in Otsego County. Farms were needed to feed the people and horses working in the lumbering operations located throughout our county. Once the trees were cleared, much of the forest land was converted to farms. Due to our sandy soils and short growing season, potatoes became one of the predominant field crops. Elmira was known as the certified seed potato capital of Michigan. Today, more than 75% of all Lay's Potato Chips worldwide originate in Sklarczyk's high tech facility in Johannesburg.

Henry Stephens, III of Waters boasted in 1916 of having the largest barn in Michigan. It was 165' long x 45' wide and 75' high with two 64' x 36' wings extending to the east. It was converted into the Waters Inn and burned in 1972.

Today, agri-tourism offers popular activities such as farmers markets, farm to fork dining experiences, pumpkin patch at Fleming Farm, Estelle's u-pick strawberries, and horse drawn sleigh rides at Cook Family Farm.

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1. Explore the 3 part exhibit on agriculture the next time you're at the Museum. See the many hand tools from our past, tribute to potatoes, and a sampling of barn photos showcasing our countryside cathedrals.
2. Speaking of barns, you can see photos of more than 300 Otsego County barns on our [web site](#). 4-H youth and adult volunteers conducted the inventory in 2003 under the direction of Ann Wright and Matthew Pearson.
3. The [Rural Property Inventories](#) at the State Archives has records from the 1930s for nearly every farm in Otsego County. Describes buildings & crops.



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1. Al Bob and Anna Kassuba owned the first centennial farm in Otsego County. You can read excerpts from his story "The Survival of a Farmer" in A Step Back In Time volume 2 on pages 74 – 79 ... available in the Museum gift shop.
2. Chapter 15 of Bill Granlund's book "Early Time of Otsego County, Michigan" provides an overview of agriculture in our county from the late 1800s to the mid-20th century.
3. Did you know the largest beef sale east of the Mississippi River was held in Gaylord on October 10, 1963? This and other ag related information can be found in "[Learning A Living](#)" which you can read on-line. The 36 page booklet documents our local agriculture activity by decade and by topics such as potato farming, beef and dairy production.

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1. There are 8 "official" centennial farms in Otsego County:

Kassuba	Bagley Township	1982
Latuszek	Bagley Township	2006
Fleming	Elmira Township	2007
Koronka	Bagley Township	2008
Estelle	Elmira Township	2008
Kobylinski	Dover Township	2008
Gapinski	Livingston Twp.	2015
Prusakiewicz	Dover Township	2017



2. Several others farms that have been in the same family 100 years may also qualify – let's encourage them to apply. [Click here](#) for more information.

3. Contact Rebecca Ten Brink at the Historical Society of Michigan for more information.
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