History Matters*
Overview

*History helps us understand change and how the society we live in came to be. The second reason history is inescapable as a subject of serious study closely follows the first: The past causes the present, and so the future. (American Historical Association)*

**What:** History Matters is an educational program similar to Master Gardener and Citizen Planner. The concept is to offer participants an opportunity to learn about the history of Otsego County, sharpen their research & presentation skills, AND share their knowledge.

**Who:** The History Matters Team will be local history buffs who are interested in the history of Otsego County, willing to commit 8 – 12 hours per month, AND able to share their expertise with others. These “history detectives” will become the researches and go-to experts. Ideally, this team of 6-10 volunteers will be diverse & intergenerational.

Another category of people to be considered is the consumer / end user of all of this research, exploration, and discovery. The people who ask the questions, visit the museum, and are in general curious about Otsego County history.

**Where:** History Matters is based at the Otsego County History Museum. However, our “classroom” will be mobile and will take us throughout the county and beyond.

**When:** In person learning sessions take place in March-June and September-October. Independent study takes place during the other half of the year. This on-going series of classes and field trips will be scheduled to accommodate the participants.

**Why:** Local history is important. **We need a team of local historians** who are knowledgeable of our county’s heritage. Knowledge of our past helps us appreciate & understand the present as well as be better prepared for the future.

*Matters is both a noun (materials, physical artifacts, events, circumstances) and a verb (relevant, important, valued, makes a difference)
The purpose of History Matters is to engage and empower a team of volunteers who will conduct research, answer questions, and share information related to Otsego County’s past, about:

- People & Communities
- Business & Industry
- Events & Activities

Information explored, created, and shared will enrich the lives of people interested in the history of our community.

How: Through a collaboration of the Otsego County Historical Society, University Center Gaylord, Otsego County Library, Otsego County Commission on Aging, Gaylord Community Schools and other partners, History Matters will offer a structured learning opportunity and various methods of outreach. Our curriculum will be based on local interests, use best practices, and adapt ideas from other similar programs.

Our approach strives to make history come to life! We start with the here & now and then look back to our past. We also reflect on how today’s actions will influence our future. Participants will learn accurate research methods as well as effective communication skills. The “student as teacher” technique will allow the information to be shared with fellow History Matters participants and the public through presentations, hands-on workshops, exhibits, publications, web postings, and YouTube-type videos. We will draw from various sources of information such as select Internet resources, OCHS archives & web site, County Library, Historical Society of Michigan, history professors, museum colleagues, and our local long-time residents who will share their life stories.

Possible Topics:

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<tr>
<th>Lumbering Era</th>
<th>Claude Shannon</th>
<th>Polish Heritage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Gaylord Car</td>
<td>Life before I-75</td>
<td>Ghost Towns</td>
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<td>TB Sanitarium</td>
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<td>Johannesburg</td>
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<td>Agriculture</td>
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<td>Native Americans</td>
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<td>Dayton Last Block Works</td>
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<td>Otsego Lake Village</td>
<td>Sparr</td>
<td>St. Mary Cathedral</td>
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<td>Military / Veterans</td>
<td>Cemeteries</td>
<td>Pioneers &amp; Founders</td>
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<td>Sports</td>
<td>Festivals &amp; Celebrations</td>
<td>Newspapers &amp; Radio</td>
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<td>Civic Organizations</td>
<td>Churches</td>
<td>Politics &amp; Elections</td>
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<td>Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)</td>
<td>Education / schools</td>
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<td>Otsego County Enrollees, Camps, Projects</td>
<td>One-Room Schools</td>
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<td>Standard Products</td>
<td>U.S. Plywood</td>
<td>Other Topics</td>
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**Learning Methods:**
Compare and Contrast (Then & Now, Re-photography, Gaylord Story)
Cause and Effect
Interviews / Oral History (learn from & learn how to conduct)
Research-based – don’t just repeat
Find & evaluate primary and secondary sources of information
Discuss & Debate different perspectives
Connect local history to the regional, state & national story
Learn by Doing (Scan /digitize photos and documents)
Classify / assign key words to archived items for Past Perfect
Bring experts to Otsego County
Attend history workshops and conferences

**Outcomes / Results:**

For the History Matters Team
- A Team of local historians with a broad range of expertise to answer questions and help history come to life will be established
- Team members will increase their skills in using a range of resources such as maps, photographs, census documents, newspaper articles, and taped interviews
- Publications, videos, newspaper articles, walking tours, and public presentations / workshops will be developed and delivered by the Team and its collaborators

For the Consumer / End Users
- Increased sense of historical curiosity about our community
- See how Otsego County was involved in and responded to regional, national and international events
- Understand why Otsego County is worth knowing about
- Increased understanding and appreciation of how and why some things change and others don’t
- Feel more connected to their community
- Understand how and why Otsego County has developed

History Matters Steering Committee: Jim Akans, Phil Alexander, Maureen Derenzzy, Sue Fuelling, Jim Grisso, John Jenkins, Roseann Kujawa, George Mertz, Brian Pearson, Betsy Sanders, Lisa Marie Tobin, and Dona Wishart.

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