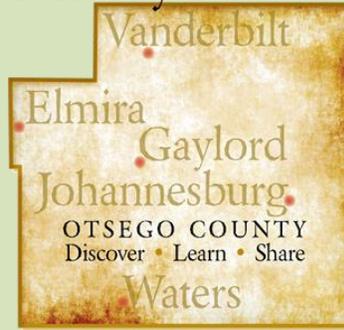


History Matters



Update # 15

April 14, 2018

How do we know what we know? That is a key question posed by Canada's "The Historical Thinking Project". Do we really know what we're talking about or are we just repeating what we've read or been told?

Our History Matters program is designed to create a Team of History Detectives who will search for information based on facts. One preferred method is to use primary sources – getting the story directly from the people who were there and actually did it. Evidence from eye witnesses.

Oral history – asking people who have first-hand knowledge and recording their experiences – provides one important piece of the puzzle. This week's History Matters Updates looks at some of the taped interviews stored in our archives. How fortunate we are to be able to hear people tell their story - it brings history to life.

“Oral history is the systematic collection of living people’s testimony about their own experiences. Historians have finally recognized that the everyday memories of everyday people, not just the rich and famous, have historical importance. If we do not collect and preserve those memories, those stories, then one day they will disappear forever.” [more](#)

Judith Moyer

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Bill Granlund conducted taped interviews of many of our early residents. The original reel-to-reel recordings have been converted to CDs and are stored in our archives at the Museum. To make accessing the information easier – without having to listen to hours and hours of tapes – Ann Wright has summarized several of the interviews. This makes it much more convenient to search using key words. Take a look at what's posted on [our web site](#) and **discover** a wealth of priceless stories that describe a wide range of topics dealing with Otsego County's history. Bill often cited these sources in his "A Step Back in History" articles. Did anyone interview Bill on tape?

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Oral history is both an art and a science. There are guide books that explain the techniques and procedures. Asking the "right" questions, establishing rapport, and knowing when to stop talking & start listening take a special talent. These skills can be learned and improved with practice. You can **learn** how by reading the resource materials on [our web site](#). A digital recorder is available for loan.

In 2008, our Museum and the Gaylord FactFinders sponsored a workshop called "Interviewing For Beginners". Martha Bloomfield from the Michigan Historical Museum provided the training. (photo to right) Participants included: Joann Skowronski, Mike Mang, Margaret Albert, Phil Alexander, Judy Kucharek, and Mary & Syl Tomaszewski. That was 10 years ago. Maybe it's time for a repeat.



Ann Wright, Martha Bloomfield, and Jackie Skinner at 2008 workshop

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Earlier this week, Lynn Meade (photo to the left with his wife Donna) sat down with us and recorded his memories of Sylvan Knob. His parents, Ouellette "Lin" and Ruth Meade, built the ski resort near Sparr in 1954. This was truly a family business. It was also an important part of our local tourism industry. Long before we were the Golf Mecca, Gaylord was promoted as the Ski Capital of the mid-west. Ruth was a teacher at Gaylord Community Schools and helped establish the High School Ski Team. Sylvan Knob – which means wooded hill - had the first Poma ski lifts in Michigan. The Meades sold Sylvan Knob to Harry Melling in 1983 and it is now Treetops Resort.

Who else should we interview to learn more about our ski history and tourism industry?

