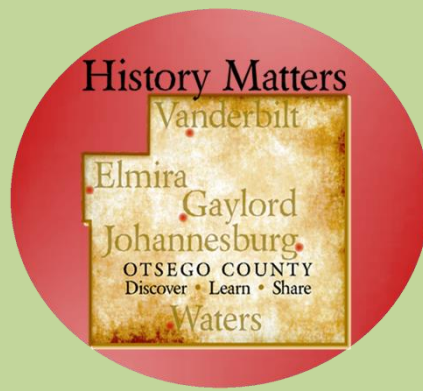


Update # 53
January 5, 2019



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History Detective



Discover ♦ Learn ♦ Share

Otsego County will celebrate its 150th birthday in 2025. So, in preparation of our sesquicentennial, let's take a look at the very first town. It's not Waters or Gaylord or Elmira. The first permanent settlement in our county was Otsego Lake Village in 1872.

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Otsego Lake Village is located between Mancelona Road and the State Park. Some of the original buildings are still standing like the one shown below. For a short time, it served as the county courthouse. That's right, Otsego Lake Village was designated the temporary county seat from 1875 to 1877. The left (north) part of the building was the original courthouse. The jail cells were in the basement.



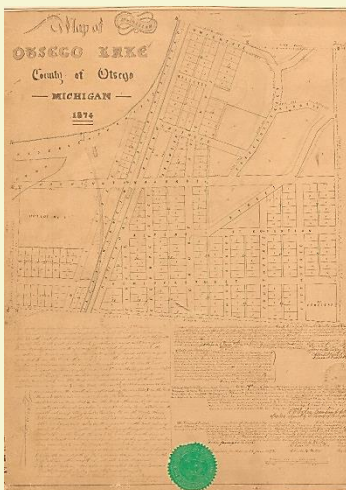
A few of the historic houses around the village are also from those early years. Two former one-room school houses that have since been converted into homes have survived more than a century in the tiny hamlet.

If you go exploring, keep in mind these are private residences.

The first road into Otsego County was built in 1869 and 1870. Today it is known as Mancelona Road and Old State Road. It connected Otsego Lake with the nearest town -- Alden nearly 40 miles to the west. This road would eventually extend to Alpena.

North-south travel was brought about when the railroad reached the village in 1873. Now the lumber mill on Otsego Lake could export its products to southern Michigan.

The map to the left shows one of four divisions platted in 1874. Click anywhere on the icon for a larger image.

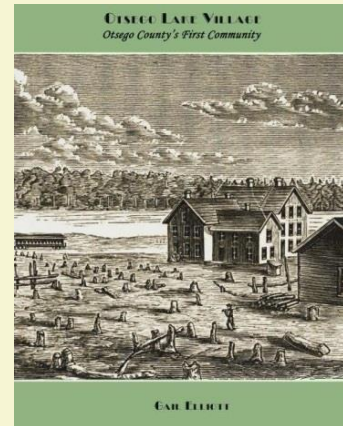


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If you'd like to learn more about the history of Otsego Lake Village, here are two excellent references. The first is a 13 page document written by Laura Marlatt and Beatrice Laux. It is posted on the Historical Society's [web site](#).

The second recommended resource is Gail (White) Elliott's book "Otsego Lake Village: Otsego County's First Community". Gail's parents, grandparents, and great grandparents lived and worked in Otsego Lake Village.

Her book (cover shown to right) is meticulously researched, thoroughly indexed, and draws on nearly 200 references.



Gail's unique perspective and depth of personal knowledge makes this a must read. Pages 12 – 17 are especially valuable because the location of several homes and businesses are identified on the 1874 maps. If photos of these historic places were available, they are noted with their page number. This feature is a great way to help history come to life.

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Dave Miller recently shared this post card of Herb Zink's store. It is now DerMiner's Parkside Market – one of the few businesses in the Village.



More photos are posted on our web site.

[Link](#)

Please share your memories and pictures of Otsego Lake Village. Or, maybe you have a question or observation related to our county's first settlement. Let us know.

Why it Matters: Learning about our past helps us understand the present and prepare for the future. For example, about 800 people lived in Otsego Lake Village in the 1880s. Now it's nearly a ghost town. What happened? Part of the answer is it relied on one industry – lumbering. When the trees were gone, most of the people left to go find new jobs. Let's make sure we don't repeat that situation. Also, studying our earliest town gives us a starting point to measure changes over time. These are a couple of reasons why history matters.