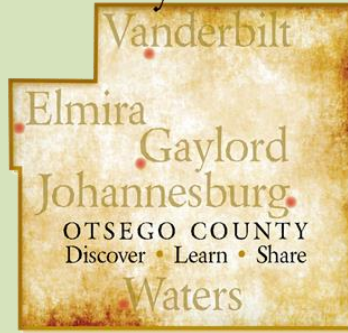


# History Matters



Update # 25

June 23, 2018

A common response to the question “Why do you like learning about our local history” is because it helps people connect with their home town – they feel like an insider. This is especially the case for transplants (people who recently moved here) as well as long-time resorters who have retired and converted their vacation home into their primary residence. This week’s Update looks at the names of places in Otsego County and for whom they are named.

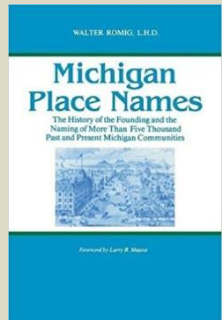
Why did our county get named Otsego – what does the word Otsego mean in the Iroquois language? When did the town of Barnes get renamed Gaylord? And why? Was Elmira named for Elmira, New York?

The origin of Place Names is an important part of why History Matters. So, let’s discover, learn and share.

## ◆ Discover ◆ Learn◆ Share

*Michigan Place Names* by Walter Romig lists more than 25 places – past and present - in Otsego County. Hallock was named for Benjamin Hallock, a farmer in Elmira Township. Sparr, in Dover Township, was named for an early settler (and minister), Philip Sparr. The community of Logan – located between Vanderbilt and Gaylord - is mentioned but not the origin of the name. Who was Logan? Same for Wah Wah Soo on the east side of Otsego Lake – how did it get its name? Another source credits Earl Bolton for naming the resort community which he said meant ‘walk on water’.

Let’s continue to explore and see if we can **discover** the rest of the place names in Otsego County.



## ◆ Discover ◆ Learn◆ Share

1. Sometimes, we have to un-learn things that we thought were true. Johannesburg was named for Johanna Hanson Bay (in photo with her family) the sister of the lumber company president not his wife as is often mistakenly cited. Rasmus Hanson’s wife was Margarethe.

2. Another possible misconception involves how the town of Waters got its name. Previously, it had been named Wright’s Lake and Bradford Lake. The popular belief was it was later named Waters because of the several lakes located nearby. However, an article in the Crawford County Avalanche dated January 14, 1866 offers a different explanation. “The name of Bradford Lake on the Mackinaw division will be changed to ‘Waters’ in honor of O. Waters, agent for the Michigan Central rail road.”

## ◆ Discover ◆ Learn◆ Share

1. Vanderbilt was named for the Vanderbilts of New York who owned the Michigan Central Railroad. Was it named for William (photo to the right) or his father Cornelius also known as Commodore? **Share** your thoughts and sources of information.

2. How did Michaywe’ – a recreational and residential community – located in Bagley and Otsego Lake Townships get its name? Does it have something to do with elk?

3. Another list of place names we should include are the 9 Townships in our county (10 if we include Sawyer Township which existed from 1923 to 1934). Bagley is named for John Bagley, Governor of Michigan in 1872. Hayes for U.S. President Rutherford B. Hayes. **Share** your knowledge about the other townships and how they were named.

