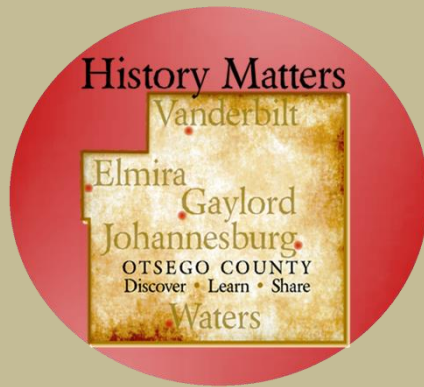


Update # 52
December 29, 2018



Phil Alexander
History Detective

Discover ♦ Learn ♦ Share

As we wrap up our first year of History Matters, let's take a moment to reflect on some of the people and organizations that have preserved our local history over time. One of the first groups is the Otsego County Pioneer Association which was established in 1886. That was only 11 years after we became a county. Representatives from the 8 townships were selected (Chester Township did not exist back then) and the group agreed to meet annually in June. It's not clear what happened to the Pioneer Association, but years later another group with a similar name was founded.

In 1910, the Otsego County Pioneer Society was organized at the county fair. To be eligible to join, the person had to have lived more than 25 years continuously in Otsego County. Over 250 people signed up. The list of family names along with the year they moved here is in our Museum archives.

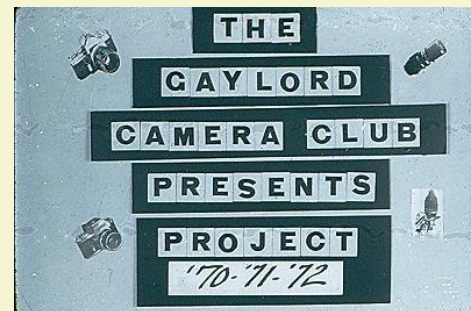


This group must have waned over the years, because in 1925, the Gaylord Study Club (above photo) began holding an annual Pioneer Day program. By 1930, the event expanded to the point a separate entity needed to be created. Minutes from the business meeting included a motion "that a Pioneer Society be organized to work in conjunction with the Study Club" was made and carried. Members had to be residents of Otsego County between 1875 and 1900. This requirement was later amended to include children of Pioneers or anyone who had regularly attended the Society meetings. This group continued until the 1980s at which time it merged with the Otsego County Historical Society.

The Otsego County Historical Society (OCHS) was formed in 1963 under the auspices of the Pioneer Society. Its purpose was to have an active responsible organization with legal power to acquire property and establish a museum, and correlate all articles of historical value in one collection. Herb Hutchins (photo to the right) was elected its first president.

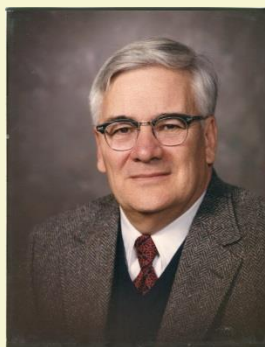


In the early 1970s, the Gaylord Camera Club collected 200 photos to use in a presentation on the history of Otsego County. The 35mm slides have been digitized and posted on the [OCHS web site](#).



Other events that generated increased interest in our local history include the county's centennial in 1975 and the city of Gaylord's centennial in 1981. These celebrations featured fun activities as well as publications that documented the early years of Gaylord and Otsego County.

In 1987, Michigan observed its 150th birthday. Otsego County participated in the state's sesquicentennial with a variety of local events scheduled throughout the year. As a result of this renewed interest in history, our Historical Society was reactivated. Sam Titus served as president and soon after the organization was incorporated and received its non-profit status. A long awaited dream came true in 1992 when the Otsego County Historical Museum opened.



Bill Granlund was the unofficial historian of Otsego County for many years. As the high school history teacher, he connected with his students and made learning about the past interesting. His newspaper column "A Step Back In Time" covered a wide range of topics. These were later published in a 2 volume set of the same title. In 2014, Bill's book "Early Times of Otsego

County, Michigan" was published. It continues to be a popular read and is now in its third printing. These important contributions along with nearly 100 taped interviews of longtime area residents are part of his lasting legacy.

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Over the years, various history related groups have existed. In addition, individuals such as H. C. "Mack" McKinley, Hazel Shipp, Fred White, Herb Hutchins, Bill Granlund, Cynthia Sparks, and many others have helped preserve and promote our local history.

History Matters builds on these past efforts. We invite you to join in. Together we'll continue to discover, learn, and share.