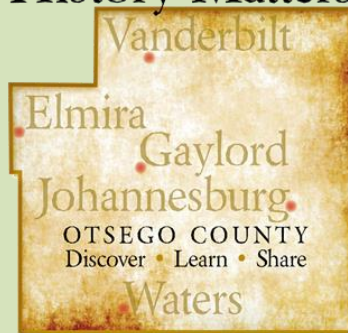


History Matters

Update # 9



March 3, 2018

This week's History Matters Update is all about the town of Waters, Michigan located in the southern part of Otsego County in Otsego Lake Township. A lumbering operation was built there in the 1870s and a post office was established in 1876 when the small community was known as Bradford Lake. In 1885, the town of Bradford Lake was renamed Waters. At its peak, it had a population of 400 and then nearly disappeared when the lumber mill closed.

Six years ago, we published the book "Waters, Michigan: The Town With the Bottle Fence". Lots of people helped by contributing stories and pictures. Local artist, Carlene Lagrou, created the beautiful artwork featured on the front and back covers. The books sold quickly at Thunder Over Waters and we had it reprinted. That second printing is almost gone so we're planning to make some revisions before publishing the next edition. Let us know if you would like to help. The money raised from the sale of this book goes into the Historical Society's Endowment Fund.

◆ Discover

1. Explore downtown Waters with a self-guided tour using the [map](#) we have posted on our web site. Be sure to see the replica bottle fence and history exhibit (photo to the right) on the north lawn of the Otsego Lake Township Hall located in the heart of downtown Waters.
2. See the display at the Otsego County History Museum in Gaylord (now open on Saturdays) which features a glass bottle from the famous fence. Visit our web site which includes photos of Remi Schotte that weren't available when our book on Waters was printed. [Link](#)
3. The nature trail in the Township Park just north of town includes some very old and very large hemlock trees reminiscent of the lumbering era. Bark from hemlock trees played an important role in the process of tanning animal hides. Hemlock was also used to build barns.



◆ Learn

1. How the town got its name: The often given answer was because of the lakes nearby. There was lots of water. However, we've since found a blurb in the Grayling newspaper, The Crawford Avalanche, dated January 14, 1886 stating the town was named in honor of O. Waters, agent for the Michigan Central Railroad. Our research continues.
2. Detailed maps of Waters in 1898 and 1907 produced by the Sanborn-Perris Map Company can be viewed at the [Library of Congress web site](#). These show the location of the 3 mills, company office, and row of houses.
3. Henry (Tom) Stephens, III was the man responsible for building the bottle fence as well as the largest barn in Michigan. The barn was later converted to the Heart Lake Resort shown in the photo below. The bottle fence was about four feet high and 200 feet long. The landmark was highly visible by travelers through Waters. Stephens had his own baseball team – the Otsegos. He hired famous Detroit Tiger Ty Cobb and they won the state championship in 1914.



◆ Share

1. Please let us know if you have photos or personal remembrances to **share** that should be added to our archives. We are looking for pictures of the interior of the Waters Inn that was formerly the huge barn built by Henry Stephens. (photo to the left) Many wedding receptions were held there so someone must have photos tucked away in a family album showing the banquet hall.
2. Photos of the Waters airport are also needed - which, by the way, was the first airport in Otsego County.
3. Ski Village, a downhill ski hill designed for beginners, was located to the west of US 27 just north of Waters. It was operated by Al and Stephanie Almon from 1948 - 1957. We're looking for photos, stories, memorabilia, and artifacts.

Share your memories of Waters, Michigan and show why History Matters