History Matters

Vanderbilt
Elmira · Gaylord
Johannesburg
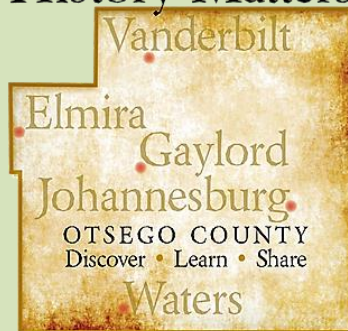OTSEGO COUNTY
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Waters

Update # 54
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History Detective

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Serving Otsego County for 54 Years! The Otsego County Library system was created in 1964 following the passage of Public Law 59 which allowed penal funds to be used to support a county library system. The Otsego County Board of Supervisors appointed members to the Otsego County Library Board to begin the process of creating a county library system. Although there was a library in the City of Gaylord--the Gaylord Public Library--the county library system was to serve all county residents.

Based upon the recommendations of the Otsego County Library Board, four library branches opened throughout the county. The units were located in**: Vanderbilt, Johannesburg, Elmira, and Otsego Lake Village**. The purpose of each branch was to serve residents of the county townships. The fifth library unit opened in the **County Courthouse** and was designed to be used by all county residents. By 1971, the library units in Elmira, Otsego Lake Village and the Otsego County Courthouse were no longer operating but the Vanderbilt and Johannesburg branches continue to serve Otsego County residents.

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On February 13, 1965, the Vanderbilt library unit opened in the village hall. It was the first library unit of the newly formed Otsego County Library system to open and it was designed specifically to serve the residents of Corwith Township. The photograph shown on the right appeared in the February 11, 1965 edition of the Otsego County Herald-Times. It shows volunteers preparing for the library's opening. One of the volunteers, Mrs. Edna Anthony, became the first Otsego County Librarian.

In 1971, a new Corwith Township Hall, shown on the left, was constructed and included space for the Vanderbilt Branch Library. Following renovations to the Corwith Township Hall, in 2015, the space for the library was nearly doubled. This month, the Vanderbilt Branch Library will have served Otsego County residents for fifty-four years.

The Johannesburg library unit was the second Otsego County library unit to open. It opened on March 24, 1965 and was designed to serve residents in Charlton, Chester, and Dover Townships. The photo to the right, which appeared in the April 8, 1965 edition of the Otsego Herald-Times, shows Mrs. Anthony helping a patron at the newly opened library.

The Johannesburg Branch Library has moved twice. In 1979, the library moved into the newly constructed Charlton Township Hall. In 1993, the new Charlton Township building, shown on the left, opened. It is the location of the Charlton Township offices and the Johannesburg Branch Library. In March of this year, the Johannesburg Branch Library will have served Otsego County residents for fifty-four years.

Bonus Questions: Did you know that there was a library branch in Waters? It opened on July 23, 1980 in the Otsego Lake Township Hall. When did it close?