



The purpose of History Matters is to conduct research, answer questions, and share information related to Otsego County’s past, about:

- \* People & Communities
- \* Business & Industry
- \* Events & Activities

Information explored, created, and shared will enrich the lives of people interested in the history of our community.

This week’s Update recalls the impact Donald B. McLouth made in Otsego County from 1937 when he helped create the Vanderbilt Ski Club until his death in 1954 at the age of 52. He lived in the Detroit area and owned McLouth Steel Corporation which was Michigan’s 2<sup>nd</sup> largest steel producer.

You may recognize his name because there is a McLouth Road on the south edge of the Alpine Center – where the county EMS is located. What you may not know is the extent of McLouth’s involvement in our county’s past in so many facets of business development. He was among six investors who started the Vanderbilt Ski Club (photo below) – the first in Michigan’s Lower Peninsula.

When they out grew that facility, he led the group to establish the Otsego Ski Club in 1939 just east of Gaylord. Also known as Hidden Valley, it was here that the Alpine motif began. McLouth tried to get Gaylord businesses to adopt the theme, but that wouldn’t take hold until the idea was resurrected in the 1960s.



McLouth’s portrait (photo to right) continues to be displayed in the main lodge (photo at bottom of previous column) in honor of his pioneering efforts with our state’s ski industry. In the late 1930s, McLouth bought a large tract of land 6 miles east of Wolverine. The 6000 acre hunting and fishing retreat known as Green Timbers was later sold to the state of Michigan and is now part of the Pigeon River Country State Forest.



The photo above shows the building where McLouth’s auto parts factory was located in Gaylord from 1944 to 1953. The Gaylord Manufacturing Company employed about 150 during peak times. If the building looks familiar, that’s because it was originally the Gaylord Motor Company’s factory where the Gaylord Car was made from 1910 – 1913.

**Discover ♦ Learn ♦ Share**

This one-page Update doesn’t have enough space to adequately tell the entire story of Don McLouth and his lasting contributions to Otsego County. Please **share** your recollections of him and other examples of his involvement with the Vanderbilt Ski Club, Michigan Conservation Commission, Otsego Ski Club / Hidden Valley, Gaylord Manufacturing Company, and Green Timbers. Or you might be aware of his generosity to the Vanderbilt Area School, Otsego Memorial Hospital, or the Otsego County Airport.

*A special thank you to Kayla at the Otsego Club & Resort for her assistance and contributions to this week’s Update.*