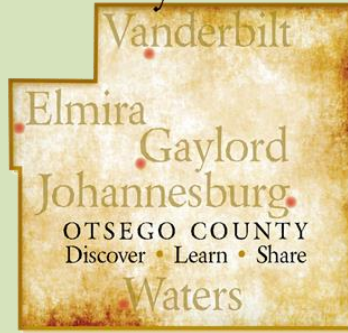


History Matters



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How important is a library to an individual, to a community and to a county?

In this edition of the History Matters Update we **discover**, **learn** and **share** the history of the libraries that have provided service to the residents of Otsego County.

◆ Discover ◆ Learn ◆ Share

Otsego County was established in 1875 and one of the first libraries in the area was located in Otsego Lake Village. As early as 1881, a library was noted to be included, on the ground floor, of a brand new two story building. The librarian, Adam Assal, also the Justice of the Peace, reportedly kept a listing of the library books in his Justice of the Peace book. Also, early Otsego County resident Herb Hutchins, who was born in 1888, recalled that his mother was the librarian for Livingston Township and that the library operated out of their home.

By 1907 Otsego County had at least two township libraries--the Livingston Township Library and, just blocks away, the Bagley Township Library. Pursuant to Legislative Act 457, these two township libraries combined forming the Livingston and Bagley Union Library--the Union Library. The Union Library was originally located on the second floor of the Gaylord State Bank Building (northeast corner of North Otsego Avenue and Main Street). It remained there until the 1930's when it was moved to the City Auditorium building (currently the parking area east of the Pavilion). There the Gaylord Public Library, as it was eventually known, remained. It first occupied a room on the first floor then moved to a room on the second floor until finally relocating to the City-County Building in 1968.

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In 1964, pursuant to the passage of Public Law 59, the Otsego County Board of Supervisors appointed the Otsego County Library Board. This board met and planned for the addition of four units to serve the residents who lived outside of the Gaylord city limits. By early 1965 the Otsego County Library Units were staffed and ready to open: the Vanderbilt library unit in the Village Hall; the Johannesburg library unit; the Elmira library unit in the Red Rooster Inn; and the Otsego Lake library unit in the Otsego Lake Chamber of Commerce Building. Another county library unit was opened on the second floor of the County Courthouse located in Gaylord.

The city and county library systems operated concurrently until merging in 1968. The City of Gaylord constructed a new City-County building, on the site of the courthouse, which included space for a library. In a joint meeting of the City and the County Library Boards it was determined that the two library systems would merge and that the name of the newly formed library system would be the Otsego County Public Library. The library units located in Vanderbilt, Johannesburg, Elmira and Otsego Lake remained open. In 1984, the library's partnership with the city of Gaylord ended and it became the Otsego County Library.

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Space was limited in the City-County building and it became evident that the library needed more room. In October of 1984, after passage of a millage for the construction of a new library, construction began. Upon completion the books were moved and, on April 24, 1985, the new Otsego County Library officially opened the doors at 700 South Otsego Avenue, Gaylord, Michigan.

In November of 2016 the voters of Otsego County approved a millage for the construction of an expansion to the library. The proposed expansions will more than double the existing library space.



Construction work began on April 2, 2018. Upon completion, the newly renovated Otsego County Library will continue to serve the residents of Otsego County.