

# Education

Education in Otsego County has experienced many changes since its beginning about 1873. The county government wasn't formed until two years later but records found, when the old Livingston Town Hall was torn down, state that in the spring of 1873 a building of single thickness boards was put up for a school. Mrs. Louise Finch was the teacher. When the building was sold in 1874 to be used as a doctor's office, a large two-story school was built at the north end of Otsego Lake Village.

The Red School was built in 1884 along old highway 27 north of Gaylord. Teachers wages were about \$270 per year with summer and winter terms, and no school in times of heavy snow. The property was donated by the O'Rourke family on condition that it revert back to them when it was no longer used as a school. About two years ago, the building was moved to the Ray McMullen Park. It was given by Mr. and Mrs. Al Bottomley to the Michigan Historical Society who in turn gave it to the Kiwanis Club to be used as a museum.

In 1890 Rush School was built near Vanderbilt, then in 1950 Dover and Big Lake Schools were put up. Big Lake was the last rural school in the county to close in 1971.

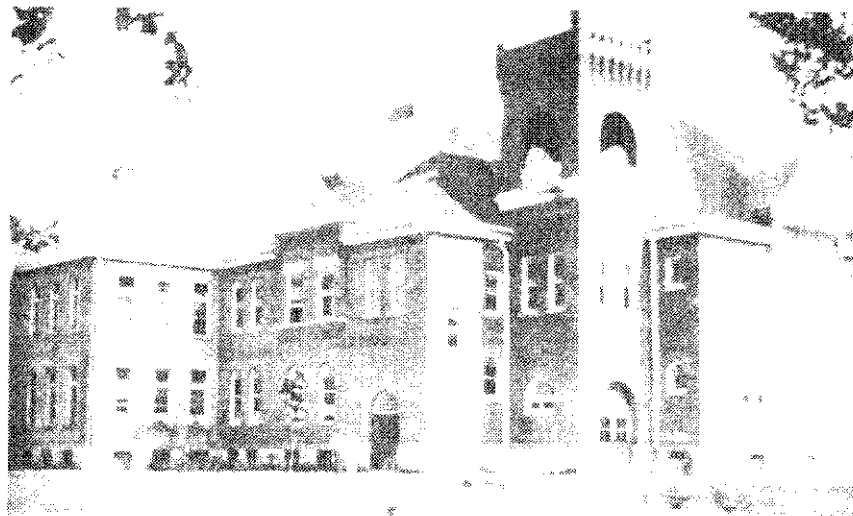
The lumbering town of Halleck, now a ghost town, had a school in 1911 built on land donated by Mr. Halleck if the school bore his name. Bagley School was also named for the man who donated the land, but it was later changed to Salling School. Other county schools were: Porcupine Lake or Green, Van Tyle, Schaff, Mac Gregor Fractional, Askley, Poor Farm, Berryville, Martindale or Pike, Logan, Whitmarsh,

Sturgeon Valley, Marquardt, Sparr, Gibbs Fractional, Vienna, Hetheron, Murner, Fairgrieve, King, Marlett, Meston or Polaski, Hallenius, Wheeler, Palmer or Lewis, Swanson, Fisher or Pink, Bollinger, Huffman Lake, Shields, Sawyer, Coppins, Five Lakes, Mount Jack, Will Waters, Van Buren, Wertman, Hurd and Burr. Some of these may be known by another name. The communities of Waters, Vanderbilt, Johannesburg and Elmira also had schools.

Most of these buildings were one-room, with a pot-bellied stove in the back which was supplied with firewood carried by the teacher and children. Children were seated at desks fastened to the floor with the smallest in front, largest in back. Drinking water often had to be carried some distance and in early days everyone drank from a dipper in a pail. Christmas and the end of the school year were occasions for elaborate programs which caused great concern for teacher and students as the year's progress was often determined in the parent's minds by the performance of their children. The beginning of school and the end of recess was signaled by the teacher ringing a bell. Sometimes older children would tie up the bell so the teacher couldn't reach it to prolong their play time. By 1944 only nine rural schools were still in use.

In 1905 a county normal was opened, which guaranteed certificates for three years, called a second grade certificate. There was also a third grade certificate good for one year, but a teacher could only qualify for three of these.

Gaylord's first school was held in a community building on the corner where the First National Bank of Gaylord is soon to be located. The first building for a



Gaylord High School built in 1890 and used until 1951.  
It was located on Center Street on the site of the Youth Center