

Otsego Lake Village: first county seat

Lumbermen from Oscoda who first began settling Otsego Lake Village in the late 1850's to early and mid 1860's eventually saw the Village progress to the point where it became the first county seat of Otsego County, but also saw it die.

The lumbermen, Gratwick, Smith and Fryer, purchased several thousand acres of land in Otsego County Townships Chester, Charlton and Otsego Lake. The men, along with crews, built dams on Lower Chub Creek, (an area now occupied by the AuSable Club) and the outlet of Otsego Lake in the late 1860's and early 1870's but because of weather conditions, the undertaking was termed a failure. Although some men returned to their old homes, several remained to make homes and lives for their families.

Soon other lumbermen, Smith, Kelly and Dwight, ventured to the area and purchased several parcels of land, some of them from "homesteaders". These men encouraged Civil War veterans to homestead which enabled the lumbermen to purchase the land easily.

With so many lumbermen now in the area, a lumber camp was built in the northwest corner of the tract of land in 1872. Some of the earliest settlers invited to select lots and build homes were George A. Finch, Adam Assal and

Blackford Samley.

Business and settlement progressed rapidly. Lumbering, the mill and business places began popping up all over. Homes for Osborne H. Kellog and Fred Smith were built and are still in use today. During a 2-year period homes were built for John Hammer, Susan A. Hooker, Adeline Murray, DeWitt Wilson and several other settlers.

During the early part of construction of the village, a large, two story library-township hall was built which also housed an opera house, complete with stage and dressing rooms. A two story, 3-room school soon replaced the one room school house. As time passed the townspeople aided in the building of a Methodist Church. In 1879 Charles Powell built a 3-story hotel to grace the village's streets. Residents of the growing community soon found two grocery stores, two dry goods stores, a drug store, a general store and a butcher to satisfy their needs.

Sports, especially baseball, were as much a favorite a century ago as they are now. Business men and companies decided to add to the relaxation of the village by building a baseball park. The park complete with bleachers was surrounded by an eight foot fence which featured advertisements.

The selling of liquor was prohibited in the village but

it is said that a drug store, the hotel and two "blind pigs" (illegal liquor suppliers) had enough to supply the village demands.

On March 12, 1879, Otsego Lake became the first seat for Otsego County. Elected to serve as county officers for the first term were Nathan L. Parmater, judge of probate, with a salary of \$250 a year; Charles L. Fuller, county clerk and register of deeds with a salary of \$1,200 a

year as well as board and expenses, and Elijah C. Morse received \$550 yearly for his services as county treasurer.

William R. Kendrick served as prosecuting attorney and Circuit Court commissioner for an \$800 salary. Other officers included Alfred Stewart, surveyor, Adam Assal, superintendent of the poor who did the job for a petty \$25 a year, and coroners C.C. Mitchell and Judson Hooker who also received

\$25 a year.

Although Samuel Livingston (for whom Livingston Township is named) was elected as sheriff for the county, he did not qualify and C.C. Mitchell was appointed at the first board of supervisors meeting and received a salary of \$250.

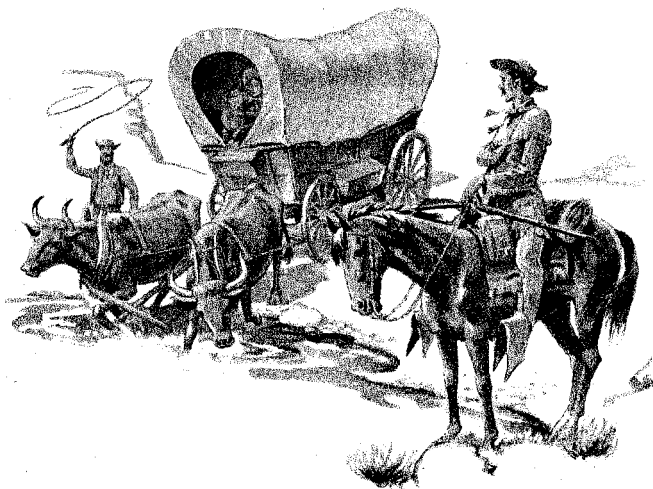
At that same meeting the board negotiated with the Otsego Lake school district to allow the board to use part of the school building as the county building. A

building committee was appointed to investigate the erection of a building on an appropriate site and some land was later bought for the purpose from Smith, Kelly and Dwight for \$1,000.

In what may have been the first scandal in the new county, many official records of Otsego Lake and the County were lost or destroyed in 1877 when they were mysteriously

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Post offices have come and gone

Post offices have come, and post offices have gone throughout Otsego County's history, and a quick survey shows a total of 20 locations which have had a post office in the last 100 years.

The little village of Otsego Lake was the first to establish postal service in 1873, two years before Otsego was even a county. Otsego Lake's post office was also the most recent to be discontinued, moving its operations to Gaylord in 1956.

The last post office established in the county was the Sparr office in 1915. After a few years, Sparr's operations were also moved to Gaylord.

The record for the shortest term of operation belongs to the Arthurville

post office which was established and discontinued in 1898. Gaylord holds the record for the longest operation with an office established in 1874 and still running today.

In addition to the locations mentioned, the following towns have also had post offices in the last 100 years: Brownsdale (1879-1882), Bradford Lake (1876-1885), Berryville (1878-1907), Cornwell (1905-1916), Elmira (1877 to present), Hetherton (1885-1923), Hallock (1906-1914), Johannesburg (1901 to present), Klingensmith (1885-1900), Logan (1880-1883), Mellens (1880-1883), Quick (1899-1920), Salling (1899-1912), Vanderbilt (1880 to present), Waters (1885 to present), and Wah Wah Soo (1913-1921).