

104 years ago, a bitter county fight

BY MIKE VON STEENBURG
Herald Times Staff Writer

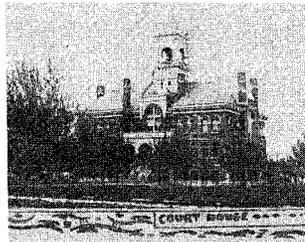
GAYLORD — Today, Otsego County government appears to be firmly entrenched in the town that has served as county seat for the past 104 years.

It would be difficult to comprehend a movement developing to have it transferred to another location in the county.

But in the 1870s there was a great deal of bitterness and debate over the location of county seats in counties across northern Michigan and Otsego County was no exception.

At that time, Otsego Lake held the county seat and that seemed to suit people from the southern half of the county just fine. But residents from Vanderbilt and Gaylord argued that it would be more convenient to put the seat of county government in a central location that would be equally accessible to all.

Northern residents demanded that the issue be put to a vote. That seemed a reasonable solution to those in the southern areas since that was where the majority of the population was located and a county-wide vote would certainly work to their advantage.



Old Otsego County Courthouse in Gaylord, in early 1900s.

What they didn't know, however, was that some people from Gaylord had already busily set about stacking the deck.

AT THAT TIME, state law required only that new residents live in an area for 30 days before becoming eligible to take part in local elections.

With that in mind, a local lumber company brought in a crew of lumberjacks from Petoskey a little over a month before the election and they stayed, working in this area until after the election was held,

presumably casting their vote in Gaylord's favor.

After the results had been counted and it was determined Gaylord had won, there was a resounding cry of foul from the county's southern areas.

The election had not been properly conducted, they maintained, refusing to recognize Gaylord as the new county seat and continuing to conduct county affairs from the county courthouse in Otsego Lake Village, while the election results were appealed to the courts.

SOME GAYLORD residents decided the situation called for drastic action and on a dark fall night in 1878, a group from Gaylord, led by the sheriff, drove a wagon and team of horses to Otsego Lake and pulled off a daring late-night raid on the courthouse there. The group loaded all the county records in sight into the wagon and returned to Gaylord.

When county supervisors from the southern part of the county discovered what had happened they refused to travel to Gaylord to conduct any of their county duties. But that protest was to be short-lived.

On Nov. 10, 1877, the State Supreme Court of Michigan issued a mandate declaring that the election won by Gaylord had been a legal one and that the community should be recognized as the official seat of the county. It also issued an order compelling southern supervisors to convene in Gaylord. The battle between the north and the south was over. Gaylord was the new county seat.

There was one regrettable result of the late-night raid that brought the courthouse to Gaylord. The raiders were only able to take the records that were readily available.

A considerable amount of the records were not found that night, and officials at Otsego Lake, plenty unhappy with the raid in the first place, were not willing to turn anything else over. It is not known who became of the materials. But it's likely they were kept, perhaps in attics somewhere, in the hope that the county seat would some day be returned to Otsego Lake.

The odds are long, to be sure, but perhaps someday a child playing in an attic somewhere will stumble onto some old leather-bound books. Perhaps then the missing pieces will be put back into Otsego County's early history.

County second in state for oil production

GAYLORD — Otsego County oil and natural gas production for 1981 ranks among the highest in the state, according to figures recently released by the Dept. of Natural Resources (DNR).

Overall, production in the state is down from a year ago for both oil and natural gas,

in part due to a glut of gas supplies which caused a slow-down in well activity in certain areas.

Otsego County ranked second through the month of April in oil production with more than 2.15 million barrels, second only to Manistee County's 2.55 million. No other county approached the two million-mark in

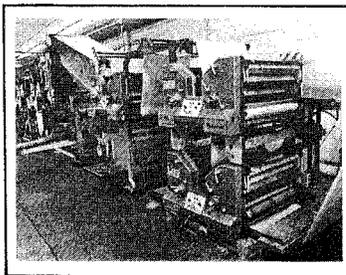
oil production.

In natural gas, Otsego County ranks fourth producing more than four million cubic feet of gas, well behind Manistee County's 14.6 million cubic feet, Grand Traverse County's 11 million cubic feet, and Kalkaska County at 10 million cubic feet.

Shell Oil Company, the biggest oil and gas producer, both in Otsego County and in the state, produced an average of 36,300 barrels of oil and 185 million cubic feet of natural gas daily in 1980. Similar figures are not yet available for 1981. Shell is accounts for more than half of the state's annual oil and gas production.

In January 1968 Central Printing began production with a new three unit Goss Community web offset press, the new press capable of printing a twenty-four page tabloid or a twelve page broadsheet publication complete and folded at a speed of 17,000 copies per hour. In April 1968, a fourth unit was added, increasing press capacity to thirty-two tabloid pages or sixteen broadsheet pages. In July 1969 a fifth printing unit was added increasing production to forty pages of tabloid or twenty pages broadsheet. In September 1973 Central's sixth and seventh units were added, finalizing a maximum capacity of forty-eight tabloid pages with two colors on eight pages or twenty-four broadsheet pages with two colors on four pages. In June 1977 Central Printing made another first by the installation of the first two color stack-high Goss Community press. This unit, specially designed for Central Printing's needs, along with the seven units in line, gives us the ability to print fifty-six tabloid pages with two colors on eight pages or twenty-eight broadsheet pages with two colors on four pages. Central Printing will continue its growth. The past 13 years have proven our ability to meet the needs of our customers; both in production and in our understanding and knowledge of web offset printing.

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