

VISITORS TO GAYLORD in 1981 find a multitude of inn keepers eager to provide them with a roof over their heads. But in 1878, there was only John Schuyler's Boarding House (large building at right), which was located about 200 feet west of the present DNR Repair Shop and Warehouse on South Otsego Avenue. This photo was taken about from where the Gaylord Lumber Company driveway is now located, looking south. The railroad tracks are hidden by the row of firewood in the foreground. The firewood was used to heat the boiler which powered the main railroad's steam locomotives.

Historical society recalls one who preserved legacy

BY MIKE VON STEENBURG
Herald Times Staff Writer

GAYLORD — Commemorating Gaylord's Centennial without noting the role of Herb Hutchins would be like commemorating Christmas without noting the role of Santa Claus.

To those involved in the business of preserving the rich history of Gaylord and Otsego County, Hutchins is viewed as something of a patriarch. He won't be anywhere in sight when the festivities get underway this weekend. But his part in keeping and cherishing the rich history of Gaylord and Otsego County will be visible practically anywhere you care to look.

It is especially visible on these pages of the Herald Times Centennial Edition because nearly all the photos came from Hutchins' personal collection that has since been donated to the Otsego County Historical Society.

Hutchins died in April, 1980, at the age of 92. A self-taught expert on local history, Hutchins proved an ideal source for projects ranging from historical research projects to grade school book reports.

Born in Fredric in 1888, Hutchins lived through much of the remarkable change this area has undergone in its first century. It was what he remembered of it, however, that set Herb Hutchins apart.

"Herb collected each and everything he could get his hands on," remembers life-long friend, Fred White, whose own contribution to this Centennial edition has been substantial. "He saved all the old documents and pictures he could find. I don't know what it was that set that off in him. I know he was the one responsible for slowing me down some and getting me to take a look at (local history)."

After his death, White sifted through boxes of old documents that Hutchins had acquired over the years.

"I found more than 200 old pictures Herb had stored away. I don't know where he got

them all. But I'd see a box of old papers and such and I'd go through it and find five or six old photos in it, among the other things," he said.

Ilah Davey, president of the Otsego County Historical Society, which Hutchins and Gaylord High School Principal William Granlund first founded together in the mid-1960s, said the society hopes to someday find a special place for the treasures Hutchins thought to save.

"We'd love to have all those things. His family has offered them to us and we definitely want them," she said. "Hopefully, the society will have a place of its own in the near future and there will be room. It's too bad that there isn't a place for those things right now."

Hutchins, a former Gaylord City Clerk, is most noted as the founder of Hutchins Insurance Agency, which he started in 1923. But he did many other things, including working as a farmer, a potato wholesaler, and an employee of Gaylord's original electric light plant, which was located at about the present location of the Gaylord High School Music Building. A two-year alumnus of the Michigan Agricultural College (now MSU), who dropped out of school as a teenager, Hutchins loved to tell people how he didn't graduate from high school until 1967, when he was 79 years old.

Shirley Glidden, Hutchins' daughter, believes she knows what led to her father's vigilance.

"The word was pride. He was always so proud of this area," she said. "He was older than many of the others (in the historical society) and he had such a memory for names and facts and things that naturally, people came to him. People could come to him for information about certain things and he would know. That was the remarkable thing. He'd remember these things and he'd remember them down to the smallest details."

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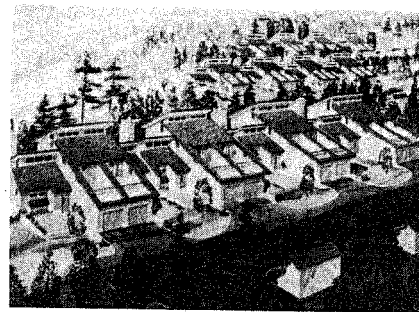
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