

Probably 1925

CELEBRATED 89th ANNIVERSARY OF VERMONTVILLE

Also the 50th Anniversary of
The Eaton County
Pioneer Society

JEP BISHOP, FORD'S FIDDLER
BIG FAVORITE

Large Attendance and Wonderful
Program Was Rendered

A red letter day in the history of our distinguished village, Vermontville, was last Thursday, when all roads led to that place, the occasion being the 89th anniversary of the Eaton County Historical and Pioneer society.

Fortune surely smiled on the village that day, for the weather was simply delightful, even the little shower that threatened for a time to send the picnickers, about to spread their dinner, to cover, not being serious enough to spoil anyone's pleasure.

Vermontville was gaily dressed for its anniversary, flags and pennants and bunting being used in street decorations, while an electric sign, "Welcome," hung hospitably over the street. The whole atmosphere was filled with good feeling and geniality.

Main street of the village is newly paved, and on this the sports were held, while the picnic and program were held in the pretty little near-by park, the lacy branches of the tall maples meeting in cool shade over all. Tables and seats were provided for the basket dinner, and everything was done with that spirit of forethought and service that has evidently come down from the people who founded the place with an intelligence and system unfortunately unusual in the founding of our settlements.

There was a very large attendance and a majority of the audience that listened to the program after dinner were comfortably seated. While young people were present in large numbers, those in their 30's and 40's, — yes, in their 60's were the guests of honor of the day, the one

joined a large population because it proved to be too good a market.

On March 27, 1836, a large meeting was held and plans laid. Very extended rules and regulations were adopted and signed. 11 of the rules specifically providing for the liberal support of the gospel, the observance of the Sabbath, prohibition, and the perpetuating of "the same literary privileges we are permitted to enjoy here." Forty-two men signed this document, and a committee of two was appointed to investigate the character and standing of all applicants to the colony. Three agents were authorized to select suitable lands, that they be authorized to purchase 5,760 acres of land, nine square, that no individual should be permitted to take more than one farm of 160 acres and one village lot of ten acres, that anyone joining the colony should advance \$212.50, the price of that amount of land and that each should give his note for \$25 to be used towards building a meeting-house.

Rev. S. Cochrane and I. C. Culver were appointed the committee to investigate characters of applicants and Col. J. B. Scoville, Deacon S. E. Church and Wm. G. Henry were elected agents to select and purchase lands.

Mr. Church's story of that trip is recorded in Mr. Strange's pioneer history and reads like a story. Of their coming to Michigan, reconnoitering through Barry, Calhoun, and Ionia counties without finding what they wanted, finally on the advice of Col. Barnes of Gull Prairie, coming to what is now Vermontville township and finding just the place, with enough land to go around, there being but one settler there at the time. The very spot where the picnickers sat Thursday was part of the land taken up by these pioneers and, across diagonally on a corner is a huge conglomerate stone bearing an inscription which reads:

"On this plot of ground was erected the first house in 1838, used until the early 50's. Also to 1844. This boulder was placed in 1923 under the direction of the Vermontville Grange, No. 625."

On the lot adjacent to the old building which served the double purpose of academy and church in 1843, Rev. Wm. L. Benedict, a graduate of May and Williams College and Auburn Seminary, came from Cayuga county, N. Y., as preacher and teacher in the academy, and