

## THE PIONEER FATHERS AND MOTHERS.

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*They Meet at the County Fair and Organize a Pioneer Association – Full Proceedings of Their Doings and Sayings – Interesting Reminiscences.*

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The pioneer gathering at the Vernon county fair on September 22d was a feature of much interest to more than 200 pioneers of this and other counties, one hundred and ten of whom have resided in Wisconsin for 40 years or more and have attained the age of 50 years at least. It was fortunate for the agricultural society that free admission and dinner was given only to 40 year residents, for had the limit been placed at 36 years, 500 or 600 persons would have been admitted free and the society would have been taxed heavily to defray the expense. The large camp meeting tent was hired for the occasion and proved to be worth all its cost. It was occupied after the pioneer meeting by the aged, and tired mothers who found it an excellent resting place.

Soon after ten o'clock Judge Wm.F. Terhune, the first licensed read lawyer to locate in Vernon county, called the pioneer meeting to order and said he was glad to meet so many who have survived the privations and vicissitudes of pioneer life. He considered it a great honor to preside over a meeting of this kind, and hoped that those present would indulge in that sentiment of good fellowship that used to characterize the meetings of the early settlers. An eloquent prayer was then offered by Rev. R.S. Mockett, of Star, the oldest pioneer present. In order to give official character to the proceedings it was deemed best to have a secretary for the meeting and C.V. Porter was appointed.

A pioneer experience meeting was now held, as Mr. Mahoney was not present to give the address of welcome.

Capt. C.A. Hunt of Melvina said: "We pioneers feel young today." Mr. Hunt remembers his first experience in Vernon county in 1855. By a freshet on the Kickapoo he was driven from his house at midnight and all his things went down river before they were unpacked. "Let us view Viroqua as it was then," he said "there was Jerry in the Buckeye house; Lincoln and Purdy, one from Ohio, Indiana and New York. They use to badger each other about the emigrants coming. The Bugby family's entrance into town took Lincoln down. There was the incident which happened in church in which Old Joe figured. "Friends we love to think of these things yet, they are pleasant to remember. There was one fellow running through the woods pulling the latchstrings everywhere and robbing the roosts. It was the beardless boy Nuzum." G.W. Nuzum: "There were no chickens to spare then, Bro. Hunt."

Le Grand Sterling said he came here poor, worked hard and had held his own as well as most of them. Is Uncle Jimmy Foster here? I met him August 17<sup>th</sup>, 50 years ago at the cattle guard on the Wisconsin and gave him a dollar to pilot me to Hazen's, (now Eastman.) When I came here, there was not a chew of tobacco nearer than Prairie du Chien. I carried a 16-inch breaking plow lay and share on my back from my home in Sterling to the Prairie, 41 miles, and returned with it in the same way. The postage on a letter was then 25 cents. In three or four years we got a postoffice at Liberty Pole. We often had hard times to get food; I remember my mother ground buckwheat for five weeks in a coffee mill to feed the family. Mr. Sterling spoke of the survey of the Black River road and Judge Terhune said he was

told that the road was first a military road or trail made for communication with the pine timber region at the time Ft. Crawford was built. The settlers improved the trail and Niram Knowlton made the first survey and laid the state road from Prairie du Chien to Black River Falls. That was the history of the road as learned from tradition.

J.C. Spellum gave an interesting account of his entrance into the county in 1851. Where stand Viroqua he noticed a rough built school house and the cabins of Dunlap and two others. He drove to Coon Prairie to Ole Running's cabin. One Kelly had made a claim where Mr. Spellum now lives and had dug 75 feet for water and found none and left his claim. Mr. Spellum bought Kelly's claim for \$25, and paid \$10 down. He had brought 100 pounds of flour from Madison which was soon lent to his neighbors. He cut hay, traded it to the coffee mill at Springville and got flour the color of graham. He toiled all winter to make 4000 rails to fence his land. Provision was scarce, sickness was little known and many poor men's children are today in high places. When he look at the improvements made all around he thinks God's providence has been in it all.

Thomas Lawrence, came here in 1851 and spent his first night with Harvey Sterling. Lawrence lived on the Clawater farm three years. During that time two elections were held to locate the county seat. At the first, one could vote for any place he wanted. At the second the two places having the highest number of votes were selected to choose from. There was a long, strong pull for the location. Mr. Lawrence worked for Viroqua instead of Springville. He was but twenty years old. Judge De Frees said "Vote if you are not old enough." But Tommy refused to vote, but worked hard for Viroqua and turned several votes for it. As but seven majority was given for Viroqua over Springville it is possible that his work done for Viroqua carried the day in favor of this place for county seat. The county offices were then log buildings. Anson Tainter was then running a breaking team. In 1851 Lawrence went to Reese's mill on the Badax with buckwheat; he went with an ox team; they were out of flour; the mill was not completed but Reese ground the grain and sifted it through bolting cloth on a frame – has been to Prairie du Chien to mill. Is glad the country has made so many improvements. Let us be loyal to each other and do the work God has given us to do.

Anson Tainter made a characteristic speech giving his early history, and how in Vermont he carried dirt a rod to cover corn planted on rocks.

Hartwell Allen gave his early history and spoke of his entrance into the county and of his visit to the Springville spring, before which he fell down and worshipped.

John White, 55 years ago settled in Walworth county. There were four Indians to one white man. In 1854 he removed to Vernon. All of his early acquaintances are gone.

Allen Rusk said that no individual knows what pioneer life is but those who try the reality. He had but a little money left when he landed here; came with a team. A friend he had known in Ohio visited him and lent him a sovereign. When Mr. Rusk was able to do so he handed the man his money and the man said: "when I gave you that I had just one sovereign left. "This illustrates the unselfishness of the early pioneer. There were few settlers in the county then but the friendship existing then we never can forget. The attachment growing up then was like comradeship in the army. Mr. Rusk comes to the fair mostly to see his old acquaintances. "We can live well now, have plenty to eat and a good place to sleep for which we fell thankful."

Dr. D.A. Bean came to Wisconsin in 1850. He came to Vernon county with 12 cattle, an old horse and \$35 in money. He cut rails 12 feet long and got out 50 a day; soon cut them 10 feet. Had two hams and a sack of flour for provision. Had 11 harrow teeth, 2 augers and a plane and draw shave for his outfit. Moved in with Mr. Waller. Soon kept a kind of hotel; never turned anyone away. One day 20 lumbermen came from the Kickapoo and wanted supper. His wife was sick and the doctor got up a kind of supper for them. He entered more land, bought breaking plow, and raised sod corn. Often worked will 9 o'clock and then practiced medicine till morning. He drew water from creek five years. Has often worked till 10 o'clock and drawn water 1 ½ miles with oxen.

Levi R. Gaines was born in Connecticut, came to Kenosha county and 33 years ago to Vernon. Has seen much of life in Wisconsin. Remembers when Messrs. White and Primmer hauled wheat from Genoa to Kenosha, a distance of 60 or 70 miles, and sold it for 25 cents a bushel. Remembers Uncle Roberts and wife of Forest. There was no more truthful woman than Mrs. Roberts. She told Gaines of a younger mother who came to her house with a babe three weeks old and told Mrs. Roberts that since that babe was born she had lived upon leeks and basswood buds and elm bark and had not tasted any other food.

At noon the agricultural society invited the pioneers to dine at the Congregational church tables and after dinner an address of welcome by D.O. Mahoney was delivered.

R.S. McMichael responded in place of Wm. T. Sterling.

Mr. McMichael landed at Warner's Landing in 1850. There were then no houses on Coon Slough. On the Bad Ax was a log cabin and little mill. No house from Reese's mill to Springville; near there Waters Bros. and Spaulding lived. On site of Viroqua only Decker's old log house stood. Eaton lived near Melson DeFrees' home; Higgins at the Pole; Tainter south at the spring, Dr. Swain and McCormick at Brookville. The first Sunday he went to Sunday school near the Pole. The influence of religion was here at the very first. This influence has done much toward elevating the people of this thriving county. Food was scarce; we lived upon potatoes for a time. The pioneers were good men and not rowdies; men of intellect and ambition. They planted and opened this settlement and today we see around us one of the richest counties in Wisconsin. We owe to these pioneers a debt of gratitude. By their hardships, sufferings and toil they made it possible for others to follow until today we have a population of 26,000 inhabitants in the county.

The poem for the occasion was composed and read by Rev. W. Haughton, a gentleman who for a score of years has been identified with the higher secular and religious education in the county.

A photograph of the pioneers and a few others was now taken outside the tent by Messrs. Adlington & Favor and an excellent picture was taken. Nearly every person's face can be distinguished in the picture.

The company now adjourned to the tent and a Vernon County Pioneer Association was organized. Judge Terhune was elected president; C.V. Porter, secretary; D.A. Bean, treasurer; Allen Rusk and John Michelet, vice presidents. Committee on constitution and by-laws Judge Terhune, Hartwell Allen, G.W. Nuzum, C.V. Porter, R.S. McMichael.

A vote of thanks was returned to the agricultural society for its kindness; to Messrs. Nuzum and Porter for services in getting up this meeting to the M.E. church for use of chairs; to Messrs. Mahoney and Haughton; and the address and poem were requested for publication. The meeting then adjourned to Saturday, October 22, 1 o'clock p.m. at Alliance Hall, when the committee on constitution will report.

Rev. G.W. Nuzum raised \$6 in ten cent contributions, \$3 of which was to be given to the lady pioneer at the fair who had lived the greater number of years in the state and had attained the greatest age. To Mrs. Marietta Seeley, of Seeleyburg, born 1812 in New York, emigrated to Wisconsin in 1843, belongs the \$3 prize. The \$3 hat, according to our register, belongs either to Michael Hinkst or D.A. Barnard, both of whom were born in 1817 and came to Wisconsin in 1836, or to James Foster, born in 1814, who came to Wisconsin about 1840.

C.V. Porter, Secretary.

## Welcome to the Pioneers

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Rev. Wm. Haughton.  
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Our veterans through the land  
    Have oft together met,  
With words of cheer and grasp of hand  
    And parted with regret, -  
They came to talk of gone by years:  
    Of conflict sad and sore –  
And half in smiles, and half in tears,  
    They fought their battles o'er.

But ye have gathered here today  
    At friendship's generous call,  
Yet not from fields where far away  
    Ye saw your comrades fall.  
But burdened with the weight of years,  
    And gray with honest toil –  
Wisconsin's hardy pioneers  
    And sovereigns of the soil.

Now looking back to life's glad morn  
    How quick the changes seem,  
With here a rose beside its thorn,  
    And there a happy dream: -  
The dream has fled; the summer's green  
    Has lost its life and light,  
And many a sorrow lies between  
    The morning, noon, and night.

Ye tread life's path with weary feet,  
    And near the setting sun,  
Your tranquil eventide is sweet  
    With thought of work well done, -  
And soon you'll hear the Master call,  
    Who loves and guides you best –  
God grant is be to each and all –  
    “My child come home and rest.”  
What matter though the shadow creeps  
    Across your evening skies –

What matter though the body sleeps,  
    The spirit never dies;  
And God's kind hand will lead you on  
    The good and narrow way

'Till breaks the holy, happy dawn  
Of an eternal day.

The same blue sky is overhead  
Each loved when yet a boy, -  
But lo! The wilderness has fled,  
The desert blooms with joy,  
And this shall be your diadem -  
Your children shall be free, -  
You leave a heritage to them  
Unslaved from sea to sea!

Look round you - joy on every hand  
And freedom everywhere:  
On God's green earth no happier land  
No heritage so fair -  
A continent: a vast domain  
Beneath the favoring sun,  
By toiling hands and thinking brain,  
And nerves like yours 'twas won;

From eastern shores to western star  
Are other workers brave,  
And commerce spreads her wings afar  
On every ocean wave.  
Then welcome, welcome here today,  
Long may your tribe increase,  
Ye come not to the battle's fray  
But to the tents of peace.

Sept. 20, 1892.