

THE SPARTA MAPLE

About a mile west of Sparta there used to stand by the road a huge maple tree that was a well-known land-mark. Its top was an almost perfect globe, and its big trunk was a favorite place for public notices. At one time there was a regulation that the stage, whose horses jogged slowly past every morning on their way to St. Thomas, would not accept mail between the Post Office and the Big Maple Tree. Then one would see one of the Gunn girls waiting under the tree to hand Mr. Gregory some letters to mail.

The big tree was there because of the foresight of Reuben Haight, great grandfather of Edgar Haight of Union. Reuben Haight was pathmaster when the Sparta road was cleared through the bush in 1840. He picked out a fine young maple to be saved as a shade tree, and taking out his jack-knife he sent young Israel Doan up the tree to trim it. The job of trimming must have been good, as the tree was a most beautiful shape.

SPARTA CURFEW BELL

In the early days - about 1860 or 1870 - Sparta had a Curfew Bell installed on Mr. Eakin's large building opposite his store.

The ringing of this bell at a fixed evening hour was a signal that all children be off the streets for the night. Later, Mr. W. B. Roberts remembers boys getting into the old building and ringing the bell on Hallowe'en nights - then about 1910 he purchased it and it is a "call to dinner bell" with a beautiful tone.

GOLD-MOUNTED HARNESS

Sparta suffered the disappointment of the railway not being surveyed through its corporation. However, the fact that our enterprising citizens contacted larger centres is substantiated by the following incident viz; A New Yorker heard from a fellow traveller that there was a gold-mounted harness in Sparta. To be convinced, he came, and after much persuasion bought it for \$620.00.

Miss Wright's Music Class.



First row front-

Edith O'Brien, Wallace Smith,
Harold Smith, Gordon Smith,
Jessie Butterick, Mabel Medcraft,

Second row-

Gertrude Minor, Winnifred Minor,
Bell Smith, Miss Helen Wright,
Myra Smith, Jessie Rundle,
Audra Smith, Helen Haight.

Third row-

Norma Turrill, Edith Rundle,
Hazel Vincent, Bertha Prior
Mrs. Isaac Smith, Zella Whyte,
Roberta Doolittle.

1. Joseph Phelps

2. Charles Gorvett.

3. W. Grisdale

4. Charles Minor

5. W. Henry Wilson

6. Arthur Oille

7. Wm. Pickard.



8. Albert Reed

9. W. Henderson

10. Richard Gibbs

11. Albert Gillet

12. Ezra Baker.

13. E. A. Smith.

14. Chas. Chase

THE BAND

The outstanding musical organization of Sparta was probably the seventeen piece Brass Band, which functioned for nearly twenty years. Organized in 1884 under Bandmaster John Lowe of Aylmer, the band met for weekly practice above the H. B. Smith store (now owned by Morley Gorvett) or in the Moor Hotel, and enthusiasm must have abounded under the able leadership of Mr. Lowe.

Clad in their new grey uniforms, trimmed with plaid and gold braid, and wearing their jaunty caps, they played first at the Grangers' Picnic which was held on the Frazer Heights (now Invererie Heights) at Port Stanley, reaching their destination by riding together in John Minard's covered wagon. Unfortunately, a downpour of rain ruined their fine new suits. Undaunted by this misfortune, they soon acquired new suits of better material - scarlet coats with gold braid and brass buttons, navy trousers with red stripe and navy caps. These they wore with civic pride until the dissolution of the Band about 1903.

The joy of achievement, the love of music and the social time it provided, must have been the prime desire of this group of young men. Certainly, it was not the remuneration (which tends to be an important factor in so many bands to-day). Each member paid a fee of \$5.00 to join the Band and received his cap. Bandmaster Lowe received \$5.00 a practice, driving his horse and buggy from Aylmer.

Public gatherings were enriched during the gay nineties by the playing of such colourful airs and popular tunes as - "Soldiers of the Queen", "A Bicycle Built for Two", "The Band Played On", "Sweet Rosie O'Grady", "Sweet Adeline" and many martial airs of that time. Favourites among the hymns were "Tenting on the Old Camp Ground", "Throw Out the Life Line" and "Onward Christian Soldiers", these being new numbers at that time.

The Band, which must have been popular throughout the entire district, was not without romance, as generous intermissions permitted the gay young Romeos to treat the fair sex of their choice to homemade ice cream (served with dishes and spoons), strawberries and cream, or a glass of home-made lemonade. In fact, it appears that this ensemble of young musicians was the chief source of gaiety at parades, celebrations, and out-door functions of that time.

A few of these recalled by Mr. William Pickard, now over eighty years of age, are - the laying of the corner stone of the Methodist Church in 1886, playing at the one hundredth birthday party of Mrs. Margaret Minard, 1888, which was held at her home on the fifth concession, the weddings of Miss Lena Martyn and Miss Maud Zavitz, held on the lawns of their respective homes,

THE BAND (Cont'd.)

going to Port Bruce and embarking on a tug for Port Burwell where the Band played at an American Lodge celebration in Iriquois Park, playing at Garden Parties on the grounds of the Methodist Church, the H. B. Smith lawn and the lawn of Robert Fishleigh. Indeed, they presented an impressive sight as they marched in formation, headed by Bandmaster Lowe and the big drum, as they marched down Main Street. Perhaps the event best remembered has been the victory celebration of the Boer War when the Sparta Brass Band led the procession down Talbot Street at Aylmer.

For each performance, the treasury was increased by the sum of five dollars. For a time, the Band was led by Wellington Taylor, a village resident of that time and Uncle of Mrs. R. B. Cummings. Later, the Band was again led by Mr. Lowe who must have possessed both ability and zeal.

At this time, only two members of the Band are now living, namely, Mr. William Pickard and Mr. E. A. Smith to whom, with Mrs. Donald McKenzie, (daughter of the late Ezra Baker) we are indebted for this information and photograph.

MISS WRIGHT'S MUSIC CLASS

Miss Helen Wright came to Sparta about 1904 and was a successful music teacher for several years. Her studio was upstairs in the east wing of the Temperance House, while she resided with Rev. and Mrs. Reekie at the Baptist Parsonage.

Miss Wright, though not herself a performer, possessed the ability to inspire others as well as build a technical foundation. Her Friday night pupil recitals are still remembered by those privileged to attend them and they recall, after a lapse of forty years, the vistas opened upon those occasions by hearing for the first time such names as Bach, Beethoven, Haydn and Mozart. In fact, a flame was kindled in youthful ears that has never ceased to burn throughout the years.



Front Row seated left to right. - John Phelp Catcher,
L. W. Moedinger Manager, Roy Haight, pitcher & relief first
baseball.

Second Row left to right- John Oille (Dr. Oille) Fred Gorvett
third base. Jack Martyn star pitcher his brother Irwing Martyn
second base.

Standing left to right- Harry Smale, centerfield, Frank Silcox,
Isaac Turrill, Earl Lintot ^{Sec. Trea.} spare players, Herb Phelp, left field.
Roy Harvey, rightfield.