

"CHRISTMAS - NOT FOR SALE"  
(Onward Magazine)

Visit the tiny main street of Sparta, Ontario, any time after the first fall frosts have painted the leaves of the maples, and you will find the villagers wearing a preoccupied air.

These folk are preparing for Christmas - weeks before other communities get in the mood.

Theirs is an imaginative venture; a determined, successful bid to keep commercialism out of this important holiday. Villagers and farmers work diligently through the evenings. They labour in secret, hiding the results of their skill in district barns.

No elves are busier than these unusual helpers of Santa Claus.

Residents of the county, and many who come from far away, have learned that they must be in Sparta early on the afternoon of the December parade in order to find a vantage point. Into the village where hardly 300 citizens live will crowd some 5,000 or more visitors.

There will be no commercial floats (the citizens give a kindly but firm "No, thank you" to all such offers), and nobody will try to sell anything but the authorized hot coffee and sweet cider. For all youngsters, no matter from what community they come, there are sacks of treats - all for free!



WINSTITATE float 1961.

PIONEER VILLAGE SCORES AGAIN;

DISPLAYS GREAT COMMUNITY SPIRIT

Sparta staged the largest and finest Santa Claus parade in the district on Dec. 11th, 1954. It is estimated that 1000 motor vehicles tried to find parking space within half a mile of Ye Olde Forge and Anvil.

The floats and other units of the parade were all prepared by Sparta and district people, who had cheerfully spent their evenings of the previous month, working out the designs.

A decorated car with welcome greetings was closely followed by a horse and rider carrying a banner and escorting other young ladies on horses. The Pioneer Covered Wagon, a Log Cabin, and a float depicting Four and Twenty Black Birds, were followed by the Arthur Voaden School Trumpet and Drum Corps, about 36 strong.

The Crooked House, and the Little Boy Blue Float, with live sheep and a tiny boy solemnly blowing a horn, were followed by the Majorettes - and the Scotsmen with bagpipes and drums were also in the parade.

The float of young people in surpliced choir gowns sang the story of the Nativity as they rode along.

The Christmas Tree float loaded with baskets of fruit and candy and Santa Claus with his reindeer headed all to Ye Olde Forge and Anvil, where the children were on hand - probably 1000 - to receive their Christmas treats.

In 1955 the Sparta Christmas Parade, the floats of which were created entirely by the village's 350 citizens, attracted a still larger group of spectators than the year before. A mile-long stream of cars parked on either side of the road, indicated the popularity of the event.

Some new floats of interest were the Dutch float, where two children in their national costumes and real wooden shoes, stood in front of a garden of yellow tulips, while at the back the arms of a windmill revolved mysteriously.

Indian costumes of distinction were worn by several who enjoyed the warmth of a real campfire.

The Sparta Express, complete with smoking engine was another fascinating feature.

The spirit and vigour in completing these floats has probably helped those who worked together, planning and making them, as much as the children and onlookers. Hurrah for Sparta's Community Spirit!

The 1959 Christmas parade saw the largest crowd since the parade started, an estimated 10,000 people. Cars jammed all roads into Sparta and the police were kept busy trying to unscramble the traffic. The floats were much the same as 1958 with 3 additional new floats.

A record crowd estimated at more than 12000 people packed the village to witness the 15th Santa Claus Parade on Sat. Dec. 9th. 1961. The parade was well worth seeing. Six Bands, Horses, Majorettes, 22 Floats, clowns, animals etc.

A new float depicted a nuclear weapon "Peace on Earth" with children singing Christmas Carols. Our Women's Institute float drew much comment. It consisted of pioneer furniture etc. Men and women and children dressed in old costumes. The float was pulled by a team of Oxen. Another new float was the "Three Jacks". Marion Churchill was the 1961 "Snow Queen".

Santa Clause parades were held in 1962 & 1963 this was the last of the parades as they were run at a loss.

COMMUNITY CLUB MADE FINAL PAYMENT  
FOR NEW PARK AT SPARTA IN JANUARY 1955

Ball players of the village and community have their own ball park of 2 1/2 acres, 1/2 mile east of Sparta. The ground was bulldozed and graded - a booth was purchased - also benches and bleachers.

The Community Society's expenses were soaring, but as usual the willing and whole-hearted help of all members made the venture a success, and resulted in Sparta having the fine Ball Park.



**THE SPARTA SETTLEMENT**

Jonathan Doan (1765-1847), a member of the Society of Friends, emigrated from Pennsylvania to the Niagara Peninsula about 1769. In 1815 he settled in Yarmouth Township where he acquired some 200 acres of uncleared land. He subsequently obtained control of some 3000 additional acres, and in 1815 went to Pennsylvania where he induced a group of Quakers to settle in Yarmouth. Doan operated a grist-mill, sawmill and tannery, which formed the nucleus of the settlement. In 1820 he provided land for this burying ground and for a meeting house, which was completed in 1821. The prosperous Quaker farming community which Doan founded was known as the Sparta Settlement.

Erected by the Ontario Archaeological and Historic Sites Board

Participants in the ceremony shown left to right included: Mr. Leslie R. Gray, a member of the Archaeological and Historic Sites Board; Mr. Burton Hill, Recognized Minister of Friends; Mr. Jack Doan, a descendant of the founder of the settlement; Mrs. J. Rewbotham, President of the Sparta Sorosis Women's Institute; Miss Katherine Willson, guest soloist; Mr. D. Burgess, Reeve of Yarmouth Township; and Mr. R.K. McNeil, M.P.P. (Elgin).

UNVEILING OF SPARTA PLAQUE

Over 100 people gathered at the Friends Cemetery on Sunday Sept. 10th, 1961 to witness the unveiling of an Historic Plaque commemorating the establishment of the settlement of Sparta by Jonathan Doan. John Doan of Aylmer a direct descendant unveiled the plaque.

Tea was served at the Forge following service. Seventy-five signed the register.

The Sparta Sorosis Women's Institute  
extend a cordial invitation  
to attend  
The unveiling  
of a historical plaque  
erected by the  
Archaeological and Historical Sites Board  
of the  
Department of Travel and Publicity  
to mark  
The Sparta Settlement  
Sunday Sept. 10, 1961  
at 2:30 O'clock  
at the Friends Cemetery

PLAQUE IN OLD BLACKSMITH SHOP AT SPARTA,  
IN MEMORY OF SMITH FAMILY, UNVEILED

SPARTA, Jan. 13, 1950 - A memorable event took place when the Sparta Women's Institute, holding its annual family night, marked the occasion by unveiling a bronze plaque to the memory of the late Mr. and Mrs. E. A. Smith, of St. Thomas. They were natives of Sparta who presented the Institute with its present headquarters in the pioneer blacksmith shop in the centre of the village, this being where the event last evening took place.

"The Forge and Anvil," as the building has been named by the Sparta Institute, is believed to have been put up in 1824 and, built of adobe walls, remains in much the same state as when it was erected. It has been extensively repaired from time to time, a new roof or two laid on, and its interior has been completely modernized since the Institute took it over. But it remains with its original dung-colored clay and straw walls as a relic of the earliest days of this old Elgin County settlement.

The building was crowded last evening for the family night program, arranged by Mrs. Frank Martin who also served as chairman. Prior to unveiling the plaque, the gathering, led by the president of the Institute, Mrs. Russell Mills, acknowledged the community's indebtedness to the pioneers and settlers of Sparta and to the builder of the old blacksmith shop.

"We felt," said Mrs. Mills "that this evening would be a suitable occasion for the unveiling and dedication of a plaque which has recently been erected in grateful remembrance of Mr. and Mrs. E. A. Smith.

The plaque, which Mrs. Mills then unveiled, is of bronze and fitted in a central position to one of the overhead cross beams. It reads:

"In grateful remembrance to the memory of Mr. and Mrs. E. A. Smith, whose families were pioneers of Sparta, and by whom this historic building was presented to the Sorosis Women's Institute."

Standing by as the plaque was unveiled were Mrs. Pauline Stringfellow, Magistrate E. D. Smith and Chester H. Smith, all of St. Thomas, a daughter and two of the sons of the late Mr. and Mrs. Smith.

IN GRATEFUL MEMORY OF

M<sup>RS</sup> M<sup>RS</sup> E. A. SMITH

WHOSE FAMILY

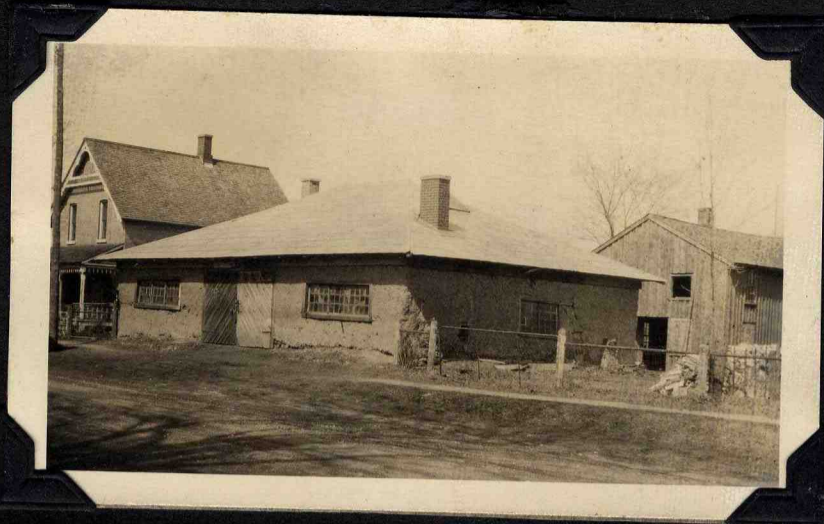
WERE PIONEERS OF SPARTA

AND BY WHOM

THIS HISTORIC BUILDING

WAS PRESENTED TO THE

SPARTA SCROGIS WOMEN'S INSTITUTE



The Old Mud  
Blacksmith Shop  
in Sparta.

