

THE FIRST PIONEER PICNIC

It had taken them 60 years to get around to the celebration. On August 24, 1876, Strongsville celebrated this event. The "Centennial Fever" that was sweeping the country at the time was the initiative for many communities to look to their foundings. Our Strongsville leaders admitted that they had waited too long to honor the founders and that few, if any, were still around. Even the children of the founders were scarce.

Just south of the Center of town, on the west side of Pearl Road, about where Star Bank is now located, the picnic was held. There was a "beautiful grove of second-growth maples on the farm of M.S.Haynes, a delightful place for the gathering of pioneers from Strongsville and adjacent townships." There was said to be between 2,000 and 3,000 people present at this event, with some 800 carriages counted in the area. It should be noted that the population of Strongsville at this time was a slim 1,000.

Leaders of this picnic were **Mr. E.H.Reed**, the President for the day, along with **Prof. L.H.Tuttle** who provided the music with an orchestra of five instruments and a choir of about 30 singers. **Rev. O.W.White**, a former pastor from Strongsville was present and had written a poem that morning. The poem is copied here in complete form. Only the 6th and 7th verses are printed in the Strongsville History. This is only the second time in the last 115 years that total poem is in print. **Dr. George Lee** read a letter from **Sidney Strong**, a grandson of John S. Strong. The Honorable M.E.Gallup read a history of Strongsville. A letter was read from Rev. and Mrs. Blood. Ansel J. Pope told of his pioneer experiences, Deacon Abial Haynes, who was 82 years old, told of his 60 years in Strongsville. He said he remembered when there were not more than 10 men in the township. Seeing so many people present he was pleased but said these old people reminded him of a windfall where there were only old stubs left standing. The pioneer dinner was of the hearty old-fashioned corn bread, Indian puddings, pork and beans, and more. Mr. Wilcox, of Royalton, entertained the assembly with humorous accounts of pioneer life. He had hoped to be excused from speaking, but thought it a poor dog that would not bite after he had been well fed. Lyman S. Strong, son of John S. Strong, remembered his childhood in Strongsville. All this information comes to us from an articles in the Aug. 31, 1876 edition of the "Berea, Grindstone City Advertiser". This article is the basis for all the later histories of Strongsville.

IMPROMPTU POEM by O.W. White

Assembled in this grove today,
In social converse, friendly, all
What honors would we gladly pay
The souls who planned for us, when small.

God's temple this, good enough.
Like that where early settlers met to pray,
And sat on benches rude and rough,
To hear old preachers tell the Way.

Picnic - 2

Our pioneers - a noble few,
Who linger, waiting for the call,
May speak of hardships, which they knew
But which, to us, will ne'er befall.

Ah! who, but they, can understand
The meaning of their stories told;
The toils endured in forest land,
When they were young, who now are old.

We'll list to them, gray-headed sires,
Brave Pioneers, of hardy frame,
Who reared their cabins, built camp-fires,
And yield to them a well-earned fame.

We'll live with them, their olden times,
Go back, enjoy with them old ways,
We'll weave the wonders into rhymes,
And let them live -- those good old days.

We'll join with them High Power to bless,
And ne'er forget the thanks we owe,
Who led them to the wilderness,
And gave them strength, to fullness grow.

Implore for them the comfort, aid,
Of Him who blessed through all the past,
And still will bless, through every grade
Of earthly being -- 'til the last.