

Another source of information about George Gray and the Forward Movement Park was the local Saugatuck newspaper, then called the Lake Shore Commercial (and now titled the Commercial Record). The February 17, 1899 issue of the paper tells of the visit of "agents of the Forward Movement Company to Saugatuck to meet with E.H. House". It concludes by saying that the final decision to settle in Saugatuck was due to the efforts of Edwin House.

Additional articles about Gray appear in the paper during the months of February and March. In June there is extensive coverage of the work being done to get ready for the opening in July. There is a description of a building which was called "Swift Cottage" for the first few years, but which may be what was called "Swift Villa" in later years. It contained both eating and sleeping facilities. It was given by Mrs G.F. Swift (of meat packing fame in Chicago) in memory of her husband. In a letter of April 6, 1912 Gray says that Mrs. Swift is still giving money for improvements.

The formal dedication was planned for the weekend of July 15-16, 1899. Gray wanted the people of Saugatuck/Douglas to participate, and formed a committee to do the planning. On Saturday evening there was to be an "illuminated excursion on the river" with a decorated boat parade, and there was to be "plenty of fireworks". A later account mentioned that the boat parade had been fogged-out. There is the question as to whether or not this plan was an early germ of a idea that later became the late-July-weekend now called "Ventian Festival".

On Sunday the activities began at 5:00 AM with a sunrise concert, with the music appropriately called, "The Birds". At 10 o'clock there was a children's meeting at Swift Cottage, while a Public Meeting was to be held in the "hill-side amphitheater". It was an outdoor, bowl-shaped depression directly to the east of the Vesta Putnam cottages. These cottages were given by J.B. McPatrich, one of the original members of the Board of Trustees of the Forward Movement. They were torn down by 1969 (Hawthorn, Bittersweet, Elms, Cedarcrest, and Pines) to make room for the all-weather cabins (Ponderosa, Elms, Glen, and Cedar) built in 1970. An early camp brochure described the area as "one of the finest natural amphitheaters in the world". An early photograph shows a wooden platform with a piano. It is now completely overgrown with trees.

The morning speakers for that dedication Sunday were a Judge from Chicago and Professor Graham Taylor of Chicago Commons. In the afternoon there were Professor Ferris and Major William S. Harbert (he was a member of the Board of Trustees of the Forward Movement). That evening there was "stereoptican entertainment". The Chicago newspaper the "Inter-Ocean" also carried a review of the weekend's celebration.

The Saugatuck newspaper of August announced that there was to be a "grand rally" at the Park the following week. The speaker for the occasion was to be Luther Laflin Mills, the "eloquent lawyer" from Chicago. There was also to be an address by a specialist in sociological study and several choirs.

In September David C. Cook from Elgin, Illinois was at the Park with a group of 60 Sunday School workers. They may have been the last event of the season. But after digesting all the activities and persons of the summer it would be difficult to have any more distinguished guests for the coming year unless they invited President William McKinley or Queen Victoria.