



## BICENTENNIAL SERIES

# A history of Thompson Twp. & Village of Thompson

Mrs. Hasell Osterhout

Nearly everyone shared in the early recreation activities of Thompson. Young and old alike participated in one of the highlights of the year, the Sunday picnics to the Big Spring.

Transportation was provided at no charge by the local lumber companies. A steam engine pulled three cabooses and two flat cars that carried the people to and from the spring for the all-day outing. Local people were also allowed to ride the daily train to the Thompson Plains during berry picking season. This trip was also free of charge.

Another popular picnic area was Chesbroughs Landing. This was in the area of the present boat landing at the west end of the Indian Lake State Park. Boating was the popular sport there with many of the vessels made by local people of Scandanavian descent. They were both excellent boat makers and sailors. One of the first gasoline engine powered boats was owned by William Sellman, Sr., originally of Thompson. He later moved to Manistique where he became mayor for a time.

Baseball played a major role in the recreational activities of Thompson. There was both an adult and youth team and both had full uniforms. Teams from Cooks and Garden were the major rivals. Everyone went to the games and the moral support was great.

An area farmer, Andrew Anderson allowed the team the use of one of his fields for the games. To cool the warm summer afternoons, Mrs. Anderson sold large servings of home made ice cream for five cents.

Dancing was another popular activity for the area. Many of the dances were held at a large dance hall owned by Fred Miller. It was located on the right side of

the road to the mill site, near the Thompson Creek.

This was a two-story building with the first floor for dancing. The second floor housing a dining area and kitchen. Music was furnished by local musicians such as the Squires Family Orchestra, the Brown Family Band, or Mr. and Mrs. Charles Sample who played piano and violin. My father, John Taylor, called for the square dances.

The hall was used on other occasions for traveling medicine shows, lodge meetings, revivals or large parties such as oyster dinners. These dinners were put on free of charge by one of the lumber companies and usually drew large crowds. One man, who lived on Dog Town Hill (on M-149 across from the hatchery), would not eat all day so he could go and fill up on oysters in the evening.

Despite the cold, winter activities drew nearly as many participants as did summer sports. Ice skating on the North Mill Pond was one of the most popular winter activities. The pond was actually part of Lake Michigan near the mouth of the Thompson Creek. The pond, for holding logs for the mill, froze over smooth because it was mostly enclosed and protected from the waves of the lake.

Many of the local people were excellent skaters. One of these was August Long, who, skating like a professional, could write his name in the ice. The northern lights added to the beauty of these evenings as they streaked across the winter sky. Skaters warmed themselves by a big bonfire on the shore.

Sleigh ride parties were also popular. The sound of the sleigh bells on the harness, could be heard for miles as the horse pulled the cutter or sleigh over the snow.

Heavy fur covered the sleigh riders and



PICTURED ABOVE is the youth baseball team of Thompson. The picture was taken in the early 1900's, probably about 1905.

heated stones were used to warm feet. An inviting fire, lunch, dancing, and music were waiting at the end of the ride.

Skiing was also a popular pastime to some extent. Most of this was done on home made skis. One young man, Charlie Frans, made a large bobsled and brought it to the school and the children took turns riding down the hill by the school. The teacher, Marion Rubin, also took her turn on the sled.

