

Missed Thompson's birthday? Too bad

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THOMPSON — Most tourists driving on U.S. 2 toward St. Ignace or Escanaba a week ago Saturday hardly slowed down as they passed the village of Thompson. They didn't know an historical event was being celebrated. In 1882, Thompson became a township. The villagers decided to commemorate their centennial year on Saturday, August 7.

Helen Jean was born in Thompson, so we were there. So were Lori and the Big Spring Boys, perched on the back of Turek's Used Auto Parts flatbed truck. They belted out, "Don't Step on my Blue Suede Shoes," "Country Bumpkin," "Hello, Mrs. Johnson," and other rhythmic tunes. County Commissioner Ernie Hoholik (a Thompson native) added the magic of his harmonica when he soloed with the group.

Omar Olsen was there, too, in pleated seersucker pants, a lavender shirt, bright red suspenders and a planters straw hat. He looked like an advertisement for Havana cigars or Jamaican rum. His wife, Ellen, wore the high-

Edwin Wuehle

President, Bay de Noc College



necked dress which was probably worn by the woman in 1882.

The street dance was held on a gravel road, blocked off by Turek's flatbed. No amount of wax on the dance floor could have improved it. That didn't seem to bother anyone. Neither did the heat. Dancers kicked up their heels to the tunes echoing from Lori and the Big Spring Boys. One lady, wearing a bright orange tank top, did her dancing barefoot. She missed few dances and took the gravel in stride.

The oldest Thompson resident, Oscar Gundersen, was led to the gravel dance floor and introduced by the emcee of the Big Spring Boys as the "King of

Thompson." His sun-reddened face beamed over his gigantic bow tie as the young girls came out one by one to dance with him.

We thought that Aunt Mary Hursh (86) from Kalamazoo might be crowned queen, but Aunt Mary claimed she didn't qualify. She was not born in Thompson, although she had lived there.

On one side of the gravel dance floor some permanent Thompson residents and their guests picnicked on their lawns.

The other side of the dance floor was lined with barbecue grills sputtering with brats and half-chickens that looked naked in the sun. Those fryers gradually turned an appetizing golden brown.

The most activity was around the beer stand in the township fire hall. One bartender (about 25 years old) sported a half-beard and a top hat. He displayed considerable panache as he drew pitchers and poured the frothy brew into paper cups.

A tourist, Bob Brauer from Montana,

had pulled off U.S. 2 to investigate. Brauer was on his way back from the hills of Appalachia where he had been studying home remedies made from wild plants. He plans to write a book about them. I told him about Richard Dorson's book, "Blood Stoppers and Bear Walkers", and the strange things Book Foye used to tell me about people in the area with powers of healing.

But unlike traveler Brauer, most of the celebrants had been born or lived in Thompson or were married to someone who qualified as a "Thompsonite."

"At one time, Thompson was bigger than Manistique," they bragged. They were also proud that their celebration was a success. "We're all out of buttons," Faye Archey said, as I registered. That was a benchmark of success. It was four in the afternoon and there had to be at least 8 hours of celebrating left.

And to think that thousands of tourists drove within 100 yards of the event and missed the whole thing.



FINGER-LICKIN' GOOD: There is held Saturday had both. Some 600 nothing quite like cotton candy to go people helped Thompson celebrate with a celebration. This youngster at its 100th birthday. Thompson's centennial celebration



JUNIOR KING AND QUEEN of the Thompson centennial celebration turned out to help Thompson celebrate 100 years of incorporation. held Saturday were Scott Charlier and Lisa Wood. About 600 people