



Welcome to the
Rochester/Avon
Historical Society

AN OLD PIONEER

Eliza (Grandma) Bromley

One of the oldest residents of the city, and one who in spite of her advanced age is still in full possession of all her mental faculties and enjoys life is Mrs. Eliza Bromley, widow of Bethuel Bromley. For the last eight years she has been living with her son-in-law, Constable Rollin C. Sprague, 42 Holden Avenue, where on Sunday last, she celebrated the ninety-second anniversary of her birth. The event was observed in a rather quiet manner, owing to a recent bereavement of the family.

Mrs. Bromley was born in Plattsburg, NY on Nov. 13, 1806, and in 1833 she accompanied her husband on a long journey by wagon from Vermont to Rochester, Mich., where they settled on a farm. Mr. Bromley died in 1880, and then the widow took up her residence with a married daughter in Owosso. Ten years later she came to Detroit, and here she formed a large circle of friends, all of whom remember the birthday of 'Grandma' Bromley. She is the mother of eleven children, seven of whom are living in various parts of the state and in Illinois. She has fifteen grandchildren and twelve great grandchildren.

The aged lady is in perfect health and spends her days pleasantly, sewing, reading, and writing frequently to her many children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. Her memory is remarkable, and she often relates incidents from the days of her childhood, including the War of 1812, and sings many songs of its battles. She is fond of recalling the long wagon journey to Michigan and her numerous experiences with the Indians as well as other tales of hardships in the early days of their settlement in this state. But Mrs. Bromley does not live exclusively in the memories of long ago, and her friends know that she is capable of conversing equally well on the topics of the day. She is a communicant of the Episcopal Church.

The photograph from which the above picture was made was taken on the anniversary of her birthday, two years ago.

EDITOR ERA: -

The above appeared in the Detroit Free Press of Nov. 16th and of itself tells quite a story: but to you readers, in and about Rochester, it is unusually interesting and there is more to add that to your young read can't help but be interesting. Many there are still in and around Rochester and in the township of Oakland that have known Grandma Bromley and heard from her own lips the story of that long ride of 22 days from Vermont in a covered wagon without springs, of the final ending of the journey when they drove up to the house of the late Ebenezer Coy, brother-in-law to Bethuel Bromley, of the trials and hardships, struggles and disappointments, sickness and death, incident to settlement in a new country with neighbors few, poor and far between. That she was of the right material is evident from the fact of her having attained her present age, 92 years. As stated above, she was born in the town of Plattsburg, NY, in 1806, about seven miles from the shores of Lake Champlain. She remembers well the War of 1812, and says that on Sept 11, 1814, when the US fleet under Commodore MacDonough totally defeated the English fleet and sent the British army in disordered retreat back to Canada, she distinctly heard the roar of the cannon during the engagement. To the young student of history it must seem almost incredible that there is now a living person who listened to the roar of the cannon in the battles of so long ago. Coming to Rochester with her husband and five children, Fannie, long since deceased, Martin, Edward, Charlotte now Mrs. Allen; and Rebecca now Mrs. C. A. Baldwin they settled temporarily on what is known as the Fenner farm about 2 ¼ miles west of Rochester on the Pontiac

temporarily on what is known as the Fenner farm about 2 1/2 miles west of Rochester on the Ontario Road, where they had for a neighbor Levi Leroy who lived on the Lomason farm. Here they remained until February 1835, Mr. Bromley then bought from the government the land on which they lived for forty-five years, 3 miles north of Rochester on the Orion Road, near what is now known as Goodison. The few people she found here then are all gone to that world beyond. Most prominently she remembers Almon Mack, who kept a general store where C. S. Goodson now does business, and she says of him that he never refused her anything she wanted, no matter if she did not have the money and she adds, 'I tell you. I think Almon Mack was a good man'. Then there was Seneca Newberry, who kept a store right across the street, where the Lambertson block now is; Elnathan Wilcox, who kept the hotel; Wm. Burbank who was on the hill just north where he made furniture and farmed a little; Hosea Richardson, a carpenter and millwright; Hiram Higley, a tanner; Dr. Herrick Bromley and Dr. Linmore were the physicians; Jonathan Pixley was on a farm southeast of Rochester; Alexander Graham south and west and then there was Lyman Wilcox who runs a mill and distillery on the site of the Wilcox () mills.

When they moved onto the old farm they found in that neighborhood John Lamb on the old Roswell Bromley place; John Bigler on the Fox place; Needham Hemingway, Asa Baker and Benedict Baldwin were up at the mill or near by; a little further north was Josiah Dewey; to the west near where is now the Oakland Church was Ira and David Hammond, Joseph Davis and the Shermans; east and north was Wm. M. Axford; soon after came Noah F. Richardson and Wm. Fosdick; there were a few others but further away; Roswell Bromley was here and moved into the neighborhood soon after but she adds 'they are all gone now, passed on to that bourne from which no traveler has yet returned.' When Almon Mack died, she said, 'Well now, he is the last, no one is left in Rochester that was there when I came, and I don't know why the Lord has lengthened out my days in the way he has.' She says she would not live it over again, it has been a life with something of joy and much of sorrow, but I tell her it is so with all; there is no joy without some sorrow. She says she has always done the best she knew how with what she had to do with and that while she never went to bed hungry there was many a time she would have liked to have had something different, and adds that perhaps it is just as well for she has never hurt herself with high living, and now at the age of 92 she is smart mentally and physically as many at eighty. Her own children tell her that they can't see that she has failed any for the past ten years. On Thursday last, Thanksgiving day, she was out to dinner and enjoyed it first rate, didn't know when she had had such a good time. Not many of us can hope to continue in good health to such a good old age and be able to accept invitations to Thanksgiving dinners.

The Rochester Era, Rochester Michigan December 2, 1898