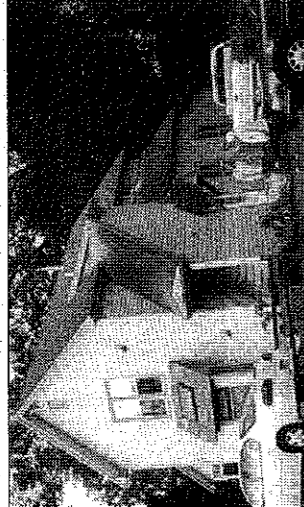


AREA REGION

Jep Bisbee the nation's fiddler. Paris musician fiddled for the rich and the famous



Bryant, employed a fella named Earl Bisbee. Bisbee's father, Jep, made fiddles in his barn workshop behind the family home at the south end of Paris on U.S. 131.

He also cut quite a tune with Mrs. Bisbee playing along on the family organ.

Ford made a visit to Paris. On his way home from a camping trip to the U.P. Ford and his 'vagabond' buddies Thomas Alva Edison, Harvey Firestone and their wives stopped at the Paris home of Jep Bisbee — then surrounded by tall maple trees.

(Ford loved camping in the company of Edison, Firestone, naturalist John Burroughs and often with presidents of the United States. When Firestone died in 1938, Ford was asked how he would remember the industrialist who founded the Firestone Tire empire. He replied, "Harvey was a good camper.")

"He's the nicest talking man."

— Mrs. Bisbee on Henry Ford

Grange Hall. The couple and musical fiddlers in Grange parlors as they gathered together.

He more and more interested in this new business of life less.

When the Fords were the richest in the area, Henry and an evening of the good old

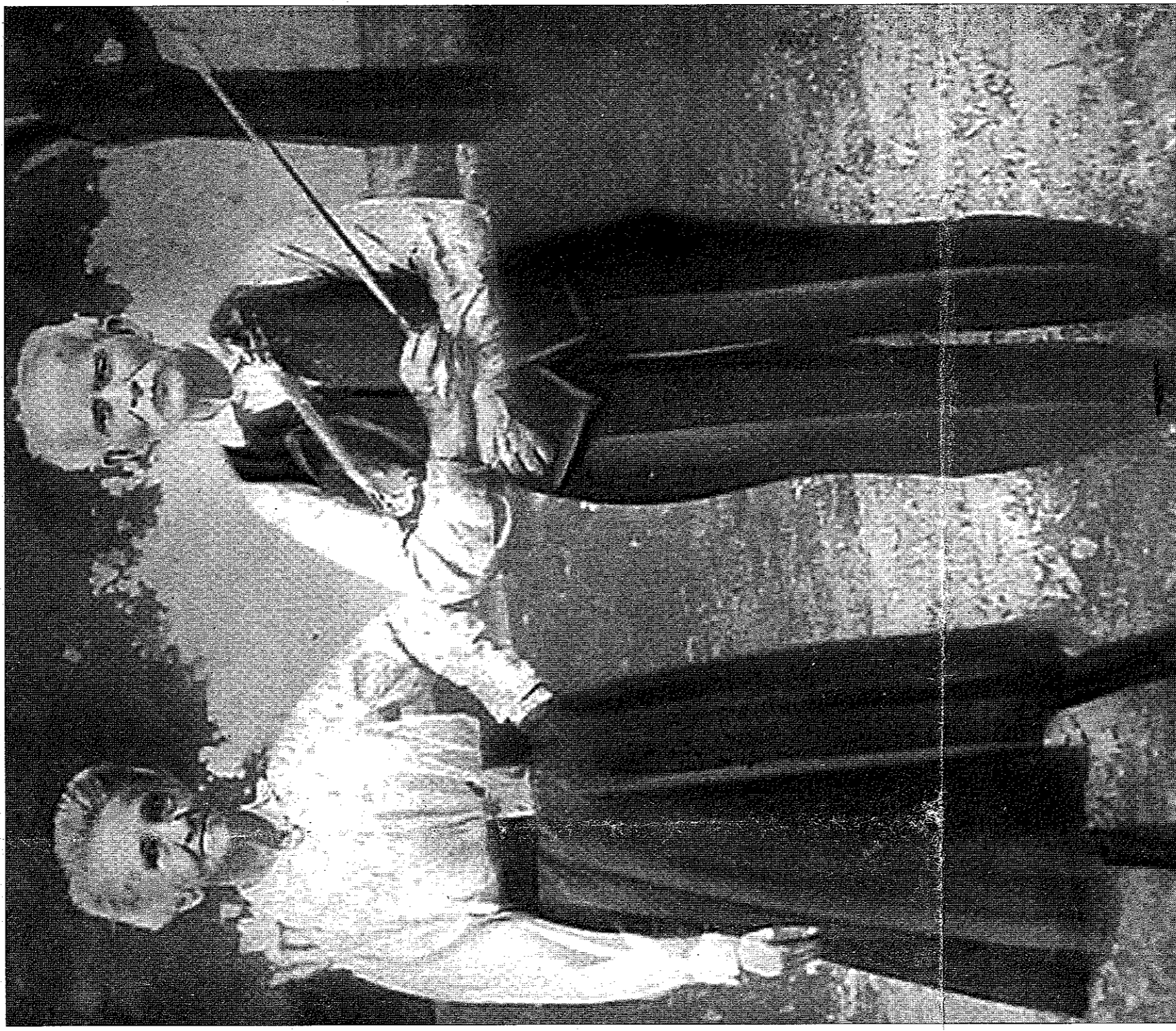
their skill on suffered over keep up in a and of earlier they stumber of the

d. a proud man appreciate being ridicule — no al.

he would again out on best dance s to be had. with a dance Benjamin Lovett hire bringing e to live in

he Fords all w to perform practice daily, ed with the the day — real iments and nes. is became Ford Motor

ster and the were on call t day.



Above, Paris fiddle maker and master player Jep Bisbee with his wife, Sarah. Top left, the Bisbee home still stands in Paris.

At 84-years of age he was asked to play for a Knights of Columbus ball in Clare — at the Doherty Hotel.

There was a problem. "When he arrived at Reed City he was informed that the state trunk line M-20 was blocked (by snow) and the Pere Marquette railroad was running no passenger trains in the afternoon or evening. Nothing daunted Jep. He engaged the services of a man who owned a snowmobile and they floundered through the huge drifts over 45 miles in zero weather. Twice during the trip the car buried itself in the snow and they had to shovel. When Jep arrived in Clare he was heard to remark: "We do not have as much snow in Michigan as we did when I was a young man."

In 1926, Jep won an "Old

Fiddlers Contest" sponsored by Ford, competing against fiddlers from around the nation.

After the contest Ford, Edison, Firestone and a fourth man, possibly Burroughs, visited the Bisbee home.

The visitors came in two cars, one of which was sent to Big Rapids with its driver to be spruced up after the long trip north. The four men took off jackets, ties and collars and went to work building a ramp into the Bisbee garage.

One of the party turned to Mrs. Bisbee and said: "Four millionaires are laying those planks."

When the ramp was completed and the car had returned from Big Rapids it was driven into the barn and parked — a present from Henry Ford to Jep Bisbee.

The old couple appreciated the gesture. "He's the nicest talking man," said Mrs. Bisbee.

Mrs. Sarah Bisbee died at the age of 88.

A few years later, in 1986, Jep Bisbee died at the age of 93, while preparing to play a concert in Ludington.

Jep Bisbee of Paris was once called the "nation's fiddler."

The richest and most influential men in America made 'pilgrimage' to his door and shaded porch to listen to a few tunes.

When they left Jep would stroll a couple miles north up the dusty road whistling as he

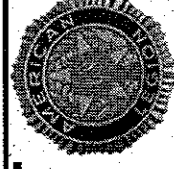
COURTESY PHOTOS

walked along to visit his sister on the northern edge of the village of Paris.

He could have used the shiny fancy automobile Mr. Ford gave him to make the trip.

But he never learned to drive and never rode in the car even once.

Much of the information used in this story was supplied by Mrs. B. Sengelau and Mrs. Shirley Graham — Jep Bisbee's great-grandniece. My thanks for their kindness and the fascinating insights they offered into this interesting figure in our local history.

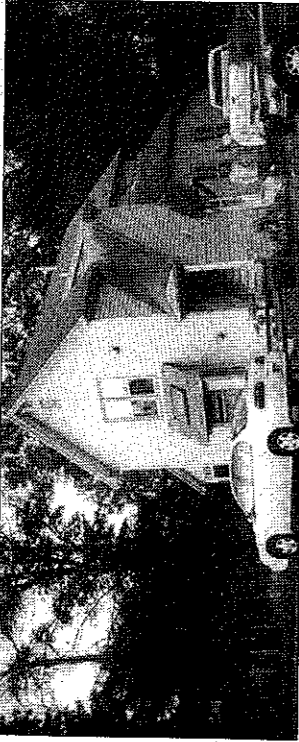


Morley
American Legion
Post 554

You Don't Have To

Bean Soup

AREA REGION



Henry Ford among those to visit Paris, admire work

By Jim Crees
Pioneer News Network

PARIS — Jasper Bisbee was playing the fiddle long before Henry Ford became interested in him.

Bisbee would have played the fiddle with or without the fame dropped at his doorstep in Paris when one of the richest men in America came to sit for a while and listen to his classic fiddle playing.

He would have fiddled 'til he died — but not too many people would have known about him.

Jasper (Jep) Bisbee was a fiddle player. Henry Ford made him one of the most famous fiddlers of his day.

Once upon a time...

Henry Ford, one of this country's first and most influential automobile industrialists, met his wife Clara Bryant, at a Grange Hall dance in Dearborn. The couple loved dancing and musical evenings with friends in Grange Halls or front parlors as they started out their life together.

But as Ford became more and more involved in his new business the social side of life lessened in importance.

Years later, when the Fords had become one of the richest families in America, Henry and Clara stepped out for an evening of dance — like in the good old days.

Unfortunately, their skill on the dance floor had suffered over the years.

While trying to keep up in a dance they'd been fond of earlier in their married life they stumbled through a number of the steps.

Someone laughed.

Henry Ford was a proud man who didn't appreciate being made an object of ridicule — no matter how congenial.

He determined he would never be laughed at again out on the dance floor and searched the country for the best dance instructor there was to be had.

He contracted with a dance teacher named Benjamin Lovett from New Hampshire bringing him and his wife to live in Michigan.

Lovett taught the Fords all the 'steps' and how to perform them perfectly.

In order to practice daily, Ford also contracted with the best musicians of the day — those who played the "real American" instruments and knew all the folk tunes.

Dance lessons became mandatory for all Ford Motor Car Co. executives.

The dance master and the Ford Orchestra were on call every hour of every day.

Bryant, employed a fella named Earl Bisbee. Bisbee's father, Jep, made fiddles in his barn workshop behind the family home at the south end of Paris on U.S. 131.

He also cut quite a tune with Mrs. Bisbee playing along on the family organ.

Ford made a visit to Paris. On his way home from a camping trip to the U.P. Ford and his 'vagabond' buddies Thomas Alva Edison, Harvey Firestone and their wives stopped at the Paris home of Jep Bisbee — then surrounded by tall maple trees.

(Ford loved camping in the company of Edison, Firestone, naturalist John Burroughs and often with presidents of the United States. When Firestone died in 1938, Ford was asked how he would remember the industrialist who founded the Firestone Tire empire. He replied, "Harvey was a good camper.")

Jep Bisbee greeted his guests and Henry Ford asked him if he made violins.

Bisbee showed Ford a violin he was working on and was asked to cut a tune on the instrument.

Jep and Mrs. Bisbee played "one of the modern jazz creations which dancers now demand."

The listeners were polite — but not too excited.

Jep asked if they'd rather hear some old dance tunes and cranked out the Virginia Reel.

Soon time after time filled the parlor and Ford and Firestone asked to shift furniture out of the room in order to be better able to dance with their wives.

Edison's hearing was already poor so he sat close to the fiddler trying to pick up the high points of the music.

The dancing went on all afternoon.

When the dancers took a break Ford and Edison stepped out to talk to each other.

They returned to the room and asked if Jep would like to record his music.

The old fiddler, (Jep was already in his 80s), agreed but noted the trip to the East Orange, N. J. would depend on his wife's agreeing to the adventure.

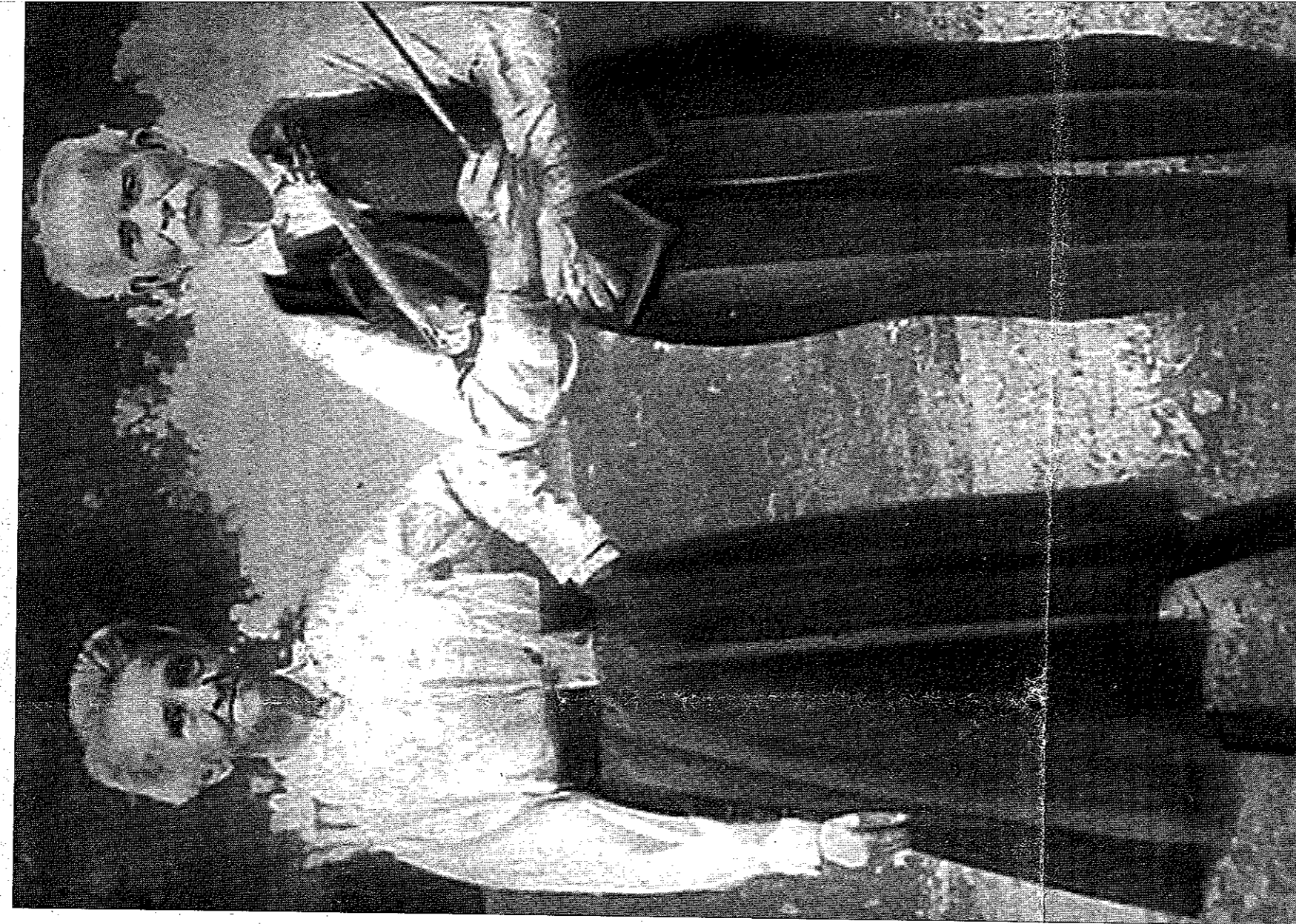
Mrs. Bisbee hesitated and Clara Ford and Mrs. Edison launched into a campaign convincing the older lady the trip would be wonderful.

The Bisbees would travel to New Jersey in Ford's private railroad car with a chef and maid to take care of all their needs.

"I wasn't thinking of that part of it," said Mrs. Bisbee. She and her husband had spent every day and night of their lives in the house in Paris. Every night for 56 years. Not one night sleeping outside their home.

"I just can't bear to leave it all. And Pop, there's the chickens and the cat, what would happen to them?"

Things were sorted out. The couple went to Edison's laboratory and recorded more records than any other person of his



Above, Paris fiddle maker and master player Jep Bisbee with his wife, Sarah. Top left, the Bisbees in Paris.

At 84-years of age he was asked to play for a Knights of Columbus ball in Clare — at the Doherty Hotel.

There was a problem. "When he arrived at Reed City he was informed that the state trunk line M-20 was blocked (by snow) and the Pere Marquette railroad was running no passenger trains in the afternoon or evening. Nothing daunted Jep. He engaged the services of a man who owned a snowmobile and they floundered through the huge drifts over 45 miles in zero weather. Twice during the trip the car buried itself in the snow and they had to shovel.

When Jep arrived in Clare he was heard to remark: "We do not have as much snow in Michigan as we did when I was a young man."

In 1926, Jep won an "Old Fiddlers Contest" sponsored by Ford, competing against fiddlers from around the nation. After the contest Ford, Edison, Firestone and a fourth man, possibly Burroughs, visited the Bisbee home. The visitors came in two Big Rapids with its driver to be spruced up after the long trip north. The four men took off jackets, ties and collars and went to work building a ramp into the Bisbee garage. One of the party turned to Mrs. Bisbee and said: "Four millionaires are laying those planks." When the ramp was completed and the car had returned from Big Rapids it was driven into the barn and parked — a present from Henry Ford to Jep Bisbee.

The old couple appreciated the gesture. "He's the nicest talking man," said Mrs. Bisbee. Mrs. Sarah Bisbee died at the age of 88.

A few years later, in 1936, Jep Bisbee died at the age of 93, while preparing to play a concert in Ludington.

Jep Bisbee of Paris was once called the "nation's fiddler." The richest and most influential men in America made 'pilgrimage' to his door and shaded porch to listen to a few tunes. When they left Jep would stroll a couple miles north up the dusty road whistling as he

walked on the edge of the village of Paris. He cut a fancy air. But he and new ones. Much in this story. B. Senge Graham grandiose kindness insights interesting story.



Morley
American
Post 5

You Don't Have To

Admire Work

By Jim Grees
Pioneer News Network

PARIS — Jasper Bisbee was playing the fiddle long before Henry Ford became interested in him.

Bisbee would have played the fiddle with or without the fame dropped at his doorstep in Paris when one of the richest men in America came to sit for a while and listen to his classic fiddle playing.

He would have fiddled 'til he died — but not too many people would have known about him.

Jasper (Jep) Bisbee was a fiddle player.

Henry Ford made him one of the most famous fiddlers of his day.

— Mrs. Bisbee on Henry Ford

“He's the nicest talking man.”

Jep Bisbee greeted his guests and Henry Ford asked him if he made violins.

Bisbee showed Ford a violin he was working on and was asked to cut a tune on the instrument.

Jep and Mrs. Bisbee played “... one of the modern jazz creations which dancers demand.”

The listeners were polite — but not too excited.

Jep asked if they'd rather hear some old dance tunes and cranked out the Virginia Reel.

Soon time after time filled the parlor and Ford and Firestone asked to shift furniture out of the room in order to be better able to dance with their wives.

Edison's hearing was already poor so he sat close to the fiddler trying to pick up the high points of the music.

The dancing went on all afternoon.

When the dancers took a break Ford and Edison stepped out to talk to each other.

They returned to the room and asked if Jep would like to record his music.

The old fiddler, (Jep was already in his 80s), agreed but noted the trip to the East Orange, N. J. would depend on his wife's agreeing to the adventure.

Mrs. Bisbee hesitated and Clara Ford and Mrs. Edison launched into a campaign convincing the older lady the trip would be wonderful.

The Bisbees would travel to New Jersey in Ford's private railroad car with a chef and maid to take care of all their needs.

“I wasn't thinking of that part of it,” said Mrs. Bisbee.

She and her husband had spent every day and night of their lives in the house in Paris. Every night for 56 years. Not one night sleeping outside their home.

“I just can't bear to leave it all. And Pop, there's the chickens and the cat, what would happen and the cat, what would happen to them?”

Things were sorted out. The couple went to Edison's laboratory and recorded more records than any other person of his time in one day. In total it's estimated that Jep turned out almost 80 recordings during his stay in New Jersey.

On their way home to Paris on the Ford train, the Bisbees stopped in Dearborn where they played at an “old fashioned ball.”

Bisbee was one of Ford's favorite musicians.

The wealthy industrialist often would make day trips north to sit in the Bisbee parlor and listen to Jep play. And the men would sit on the Bisbees' front porch and watch the world pass by while talking about the business of the day.

Ford enjoyed Bisbee's music and he appreciated Jep as a man. Bisbee's love of music and his dedication to the art wasn't limited to Henry Ford's approval. Jep loved to play.



Above, Paris fiddle maker and master player Jep Bisbee with his wife, Sarah. Top left, the Bisbee family organ.

On his way home from a camping trip to the U.P. Ford and his ‘vagabond’ buddies Thomas Alva Edison, Harvey Firestone and their wives stopped at the Paris home of Jep Bisbee — then surrounded by tall maple trees.

(Ford loved camping in the company of Edison, Firestone, naturalist John Burroughs and often with presidents of the United States. When Firestone died in 1938, Ford was asked how he would remember the industrialist who founded the Firestone Tire empire. He replied, “Harvey was a good camper.”)

Jep Bisbee greeted his guests and Henry Ford asked him if he made violins.

Bisbee showed Ford a violin he was working on and was asked to cut a tune on the instrument.

Jep and Mrs. Bisbee played “... one of the modern jazz creations which dancers demand.”

The listeners were polite — but not too excited.

Jep asked if they'd rather hear some old dance tunes and cranked out the Virginia Reel.

Soon time after time filled the parlor and Ford and Firestone asked to shift furniture out of the room in order to be better able to dance with their wives.

Edison's hearing was already poor so he sat close to the fiddler trying to pick up the high points of the music.

The dancing went on all afternoon.

When the dancers took a break Ford and Edison stepped out to talk to each other.

They returned to the room and asked if Jep would like to record his music.

The old fiddler, (Jep was already in his 80s), agreed but noted the trip to the East Orange, N. J. would depend on his wife's agreeing to the adventure.

Mrs. Bisbee hesitated and Clara Ford and Mrs. Edison launched into a campaign convincing the older lady the trip would be wonderful.

The Bisbees would travel to New Jersey in Ford's private railroad car with a chef and maid to take care of all their needs.

“I wasn't thinking of that part of it,” said Mrs. Bisbee.

She and her husband had spent every day and night of their lives in the house in Paris. Every night for 56 years. Not one night sleeping outside their home.

“I just can't bear to leave it all. And Pop, there's the chickens and the cat, what would happen and the cat, what would happen to them?”

Things were sorted out. The couple went to Edison's laboratory and recorded more records than any other person of his time in one day. In total it's estimated that Jep turned out almost 80 recordings during his stay in New Jersey.

On their way home to Paris on the Ford train, the Bisbees stopped in Dearborn where they played at an “old fashioned ball.”

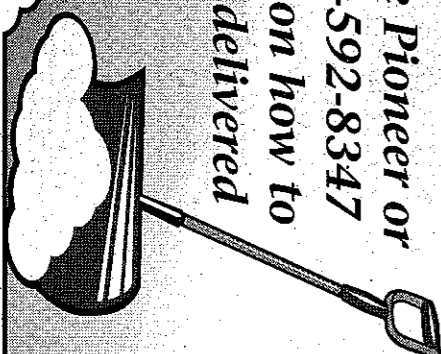
Bisbee was one of Ford's favorite musicians.

The wealthy industrialist often would make day trips north to sit in the Bisbee parlor and listen to Jep play. And the men would sit on the Bisbees' front porch and watch the world pass by while talking about the business of the day.

Ford enjoyed Bisbee's music and he appreciated Jep as a man. Bisbee's love of music and his dedication to the art wasn't limited to Henry Ford's approval. Jep loved to play.

**You Don't Have To
Brave The Cold
For Your Issue Of
Our Times.**

**Come in to The Pioneer or
call Alicia 231-592-8347
for information on how to
have Our Times delivered
to your home.**



The old couple appreciated the gesture.

“He's the nicest talking man,” said Mrs. Bisbee.

Mrs. Sarah Bisbee died at the age of 88.

A few years later, in 1936, Jep Bisbee died at the age of 93, while preparing to play a concert in Ludington.

Jep Bisbee of Paris was once called the “nation's fiddler.”

The richest and most influential men in America made ‘pilgrimage’ to his door and shaded porch to listen to a few tunes.

When they left Jep would stroll a couple miles north up the dusty road whistling as he

walked along on the porch of Paris.

He could fancy auto him to make one.

But he and newer one.

Much of this story is told in B. Sengela's Graham — grandniece kindness insights to interesting story.

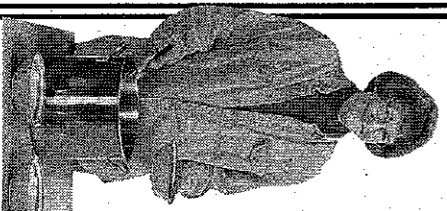


**Morie
American Fiddle
Contest
Post-55
January 19**

\$5 Entry Fee
All money paid depending on entries
Judging begins

Have soup there before
Soup judged on o
look, smell &
4 judges will announce
and present the prize to

Sat. \$1 Be
2560 Northland Drive • Mor
231-856-4229



Mrs. Bisbee playing along on the family organ.

On his way home from a camping trip to the U.P. Ford and his 'vagabond' buddies Thomas Alva Edison, Harvey Firestone and their wives stopped at the Paris home of Jep Bisbee — then surrounded by tall maple trees.

(Ford loved camping in the company of Edison, Firestone, naturalist John Burroughs and often with presidents of the United States. When Firestone died in 1938, Ford was asked how he would remember the industri-

'He's the nicest talking man.'

—Mrs. Bisbee on Henry Ford

Jep Bisbee greeted his guests and Henry Ford asked him if he made violins. Bisbee showed Ford a violin he was working on and was asked to cut a tune on the instrument. Jep and Mrs. Bisbee played "... one of the modern jazz creations which dancers now demand."

The listeners were polite — but not too excited.

Jep asked if they'd rather hear some old dance tunes and cranked out the Virginia Reel.

Soon time after time filled the parlor and Ford and Firestone asked to shift furniture out of the room in order to be better able to dance with their wives.

Edison's hearing was already poor so he sat close to the fiddler trying to pick up the high points of the music.

The dancing went on all afternoon.

When the dancers took a break Ford and Edison stepped out to talk to each other.

They returned to the room and asked if Jep would like to record his music.

The old fiddler, (Jep was already in his 80s), agreed but noted the trip to the East Orange, N. J. would depend on his wife's agreeing to the adventure.

Mrs. Bisbee hesitated and Clara Ford and Mrs. Edison launched into a campaign convincing the older lady the trip would be wonderful.

The Bisbees would travel to New Jersey in Ford's private railroad car with a chef and maid to take care of all their needs.

"I wasn't thinking of that part of it," said Mrs. Bisbee. She and her husband had spent every day and night of their lives in the house in Paris. Every night for 56 years. Not one night sleeping outside their home.

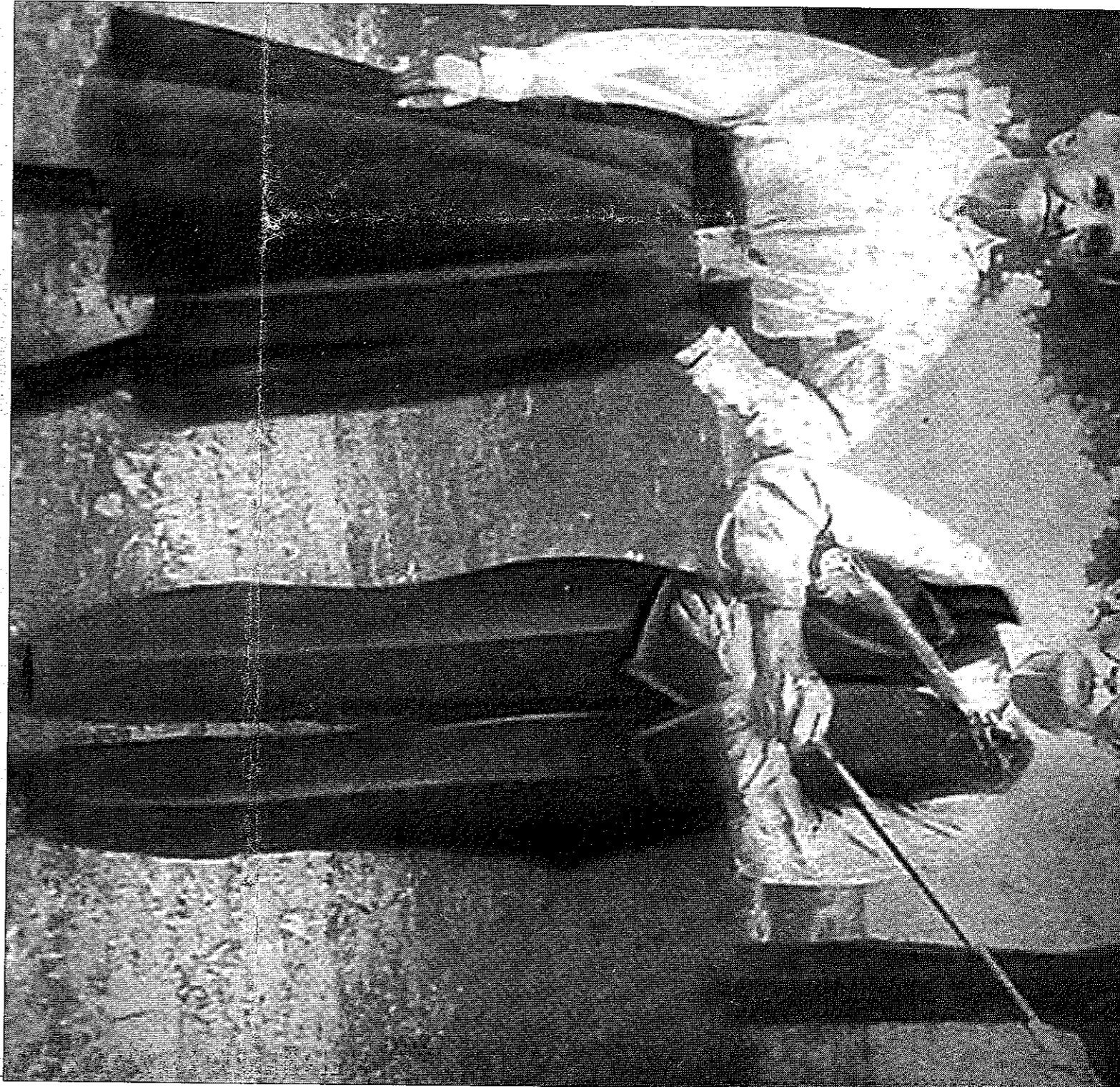
"Just can't bear to leave it all. And Pop, there's the chickens and the cat, what would happen to them?"

Things were sorted out. The couple went to Edison's laboratory and recorded more records than any other person of his time in one day. In total it's estimated that Jep turned out almost 80 recordings during his stay in New Jersey.

On their way home to Paris on the Ford train, the Bisbees stopped in Dearborn where they played at an "old fashioned ball."

Bisbee was one of Ford's favorite musicians. The wealthy industrialist often would make day trips north to sit in the Bisbee parlor and listen to Jep play. And the men would sit on the Bisbees' front porch and watch the world pass by while talking about the business of the day.

Ford enjoyed Bisbee's music and he appreciated Jep as a man. Bisbee's love of music and his dedication to the art wasn't limited to Henry Ford's approval. Jep loved to play.



COURTESY PHOTOS
Above, Paris fiddle maker and master player Jep Bisbee with his wife, Sarah. Top left, the Bisbee home still stands in Paris.

At 84-years of age he was asked to play for a Knights of Columbus ball in Clare — at the Doherty Hotel.

"When he arrived at Reed City he was informed that the state trunk line M-20 was blocked (by snow) and the Pere Marquette railroad was running no passenger trains in the afternoon or evening. Nothing daunted Jep. He engaged the services of a man who owned a snowmobile and they floundered through the huge drifts over 45 miles in zero weather. Twice during the trip the car buried itself in the snow and they had to shovel. When Jep arrived in Clare he was heard to remark: 'We do not have as much snow in Michigan as we did when I was a young man.'"

In 1926, Jep won an "Old Fiddlers Contest" sponsored by Ford, competing against fiddlers from around the nation. After the contest Ford, Edison, Firestone and a fourth man, possibly Burroughs, visited the Bisbee home. The visitors came in two cars, one of which was sent to Big Rapids with its driver to be spruced up after the long trip north. The four men took off jackets, ties and collars and went to work building a ramp into the Bisbee garage. One of the party turned to Mrs. Bisbee and said: "Four millionaires are laying those planks."

When the ramp was completed and the car had returned from Big Rapids it was driven into the barn and parked — a present from Henry Ford to Jep Bisbee.

Fiddlers Contest" sponsored by Ford, competing against fiddlers from around the nation.

After the contest Ford, Edison, Firestone and a fourth man, possibly Burroughs, visited the Bisbee home.

The visitors came in two cars, one of which was sent to Big Rapids with its driver to be spruced up after the long trip north.

The four men took off jackets, ties and collars and went to work building a ramp into the Bisbee garage.

One of the party turned to Mrs. Bisbee and said: "Four millionaires are laying those planks."

When the ramp was completed and the car had returned from Big Rapids it was driven into the barn and parked — a present from Henry Ford to Jep Bisbee.

You Don't Have To Brave The Cold For Your Issue Of Our Times.

Come in to The Pioneer or call Alicia 231-592-8347 for information on how to have Our Times delivered to your home.

The old couple appreciated the gesture. "He's the nicest talking man," said Mrs. Bisbee. Mrs. Sarah Bisbee died at the age of 88. A few years later, in 1936, Jep Bisbee died at the age of 93, while preparing to play a concert in Ludington.

Jep Bisbee of Paris was once called the "nation's fiddler." The richest and most influential men in America made 'pilgrimage' to his door and shaded porch to listen to a few tunes. When they left Jep would stroll a couple miles north up the dusty road whistling as he

Much of the information used in this story was supplied by Mrs. B. Sengelau and Mrs. Shirley Graham — Jep Bisbee's great-grandniece. My thanks for their kindness and the fascinating insights they offered into this interesting figure in our local history.

Morley American Legion Post 554

Bean Soup Contest January 17th

\$5 Entry Fee
All money paid out depending on entries.
Have soup there by 12 Noon
Judging begins at 3 pm.

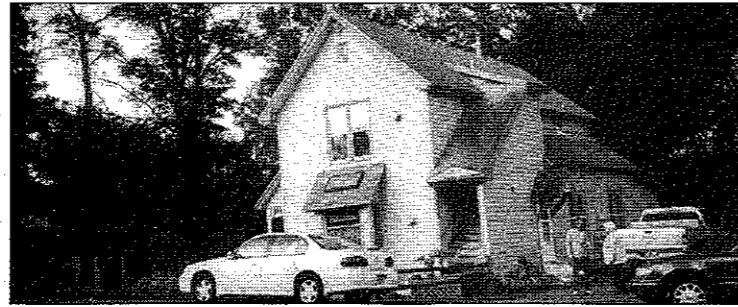
Soup judged on originality, look, smell & taste.
4 judges will announce the winner and present the prize to that person.

Sat. \$1 Beer
2560 Northland Drive • Morley
231-856-4229

P U B L I C

AREA REGION

Jep Bisbee the nation's fiddler: *Paris musician fiddled for the rich and the famous*



Henry Ford among those to visit Paris, admire work

By Jim Crees
Pioneer News Network

PARIS — Jasper Bisbee was playing the fiddle long before Henry Ford became interested in him.

Bisbee would have played the fiddle with or without the fame dropped at his doorstep in Paris when one of the richest men in America came to sit for a while and listen to his classic fiddle playing.

He would have fiddled 'til he died — but not too many people would have known about him.

Jasper (Jep) Bisbee was a fiddle player.

Henry Ford made him one of the most famous fiddlers of his day.

Once upon a time ...

Henry Ford, one of this country's first and most influential automobile industrialists, met his wife Clara Bryant, at a Grange Hall dance in Dearborn. The couple loved dancing and musical evenings with friends in Grange Halls or front parlors as they started out their life together.

But as Ford became more and more involved in his new business the social side of life lessened in importance.

Years later, when the Fords

Bryant, employed a fella named Earl Bisbee. Bisbee's father, Jep, made fiddles in his barn workshop behind the family home at the south end of Paris on U.S. 131.

He also cut quite a tune with Mrs. Bisbee playing along on the family organ.

Ford made a visit to Paris.

On his way home from a camping trip to the U.P. Ford and his 'vagabond' buddies Thomas Alva Edison, Harvey Firestone and their wives stopped at the Paris home of Jep Bisbee — then surrounded by tall maple trees.

(Ford loved camping in the company of Edison, Firestone, naturalist John Burroughs and often with presidents of the United States. When Firestone died in 1938, Ford was asked how he would remember the industrialist who founded the Firestone Tire empire. He replied, "Harvey was a good camper.")

Jep Bisbee greeted his guests and Henry Ford asked him if he made violins.

Bisbee showed Ford a violin he was working on and was asked to cut a tune on the instrument.

Jep and Mrs. Bisbee played " ... one of the modern jazz creations which dancers nowadays demand."

The listeners were polite — but not too excited.

Jep asked if they'd rather hear some old dance tunes and cranked out the Virginia Reel.

Soon tune after tune filled the parlor and Ford and Firestone asked to shift furniture out of the room in order to be better able to dance with their wives.

"He's the nicest talking man."

— Mrs. Bisbee on Henry Ford



