

5. MARTIN SPARKS & PIERCE

Martin V. Sparks was a 72 year old pioneer who owned a 788 acre farm just west of Davisville in 1905. Less than a week after Governor Pardee signed the State Farm bill and 6 days before the central event "mass meeting" on March 30, George Pierce visited Martin Sparks on his way into town.

Pierce asked Sparks to give him an option to buy his ranch for the purpose of offering it as a site for the State Farm.

Sparks agreed to providing such an option, and the document, reproduced below, was signed on April 17, 1905.

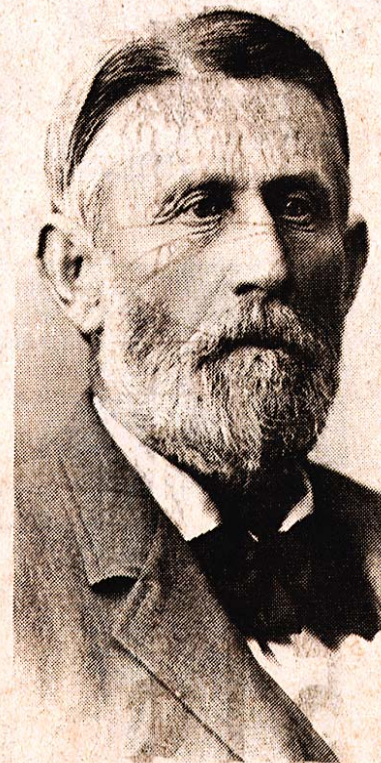
In 1905 Martin V. Sparks was 72 years old. As the sketch of his life by Joann Larkey shown here reports, he had farmed many decades before 1905.

Therefore, when George Pierce approached him with an opportunity to sell his farm, a retirement fund may not have been far from his mind.

(Larkey sketch reproduced from her *Davis Enterprise* "Portraits of the Past" series.)

Martin V. Sparks, who sold his 730-acre ranch at Davisville to the Regents of the University of California for the University State Farm, was also the major contributor to the "water right" fund mentioned in this column. It was a generous gesture despite the fact that he stood to receive a \$90,000 remuneration for his land if the Davisville site was selected. A native of North Carolina who grew up in Cooper county, Missouri, Sparks first came to California in 1850. After returning home via Panama he crossed the plains five more times, bringing with him a wife, the former Sarah Judy, on the last journey in 1859.

A biographical sketch of the Sparks family, published in Tom Gregory's "History of Solano and Napa Counties" (1912) notes, "The wedding tour of Mr. and Mrs. Sparks consisted of a trip across the plains in a



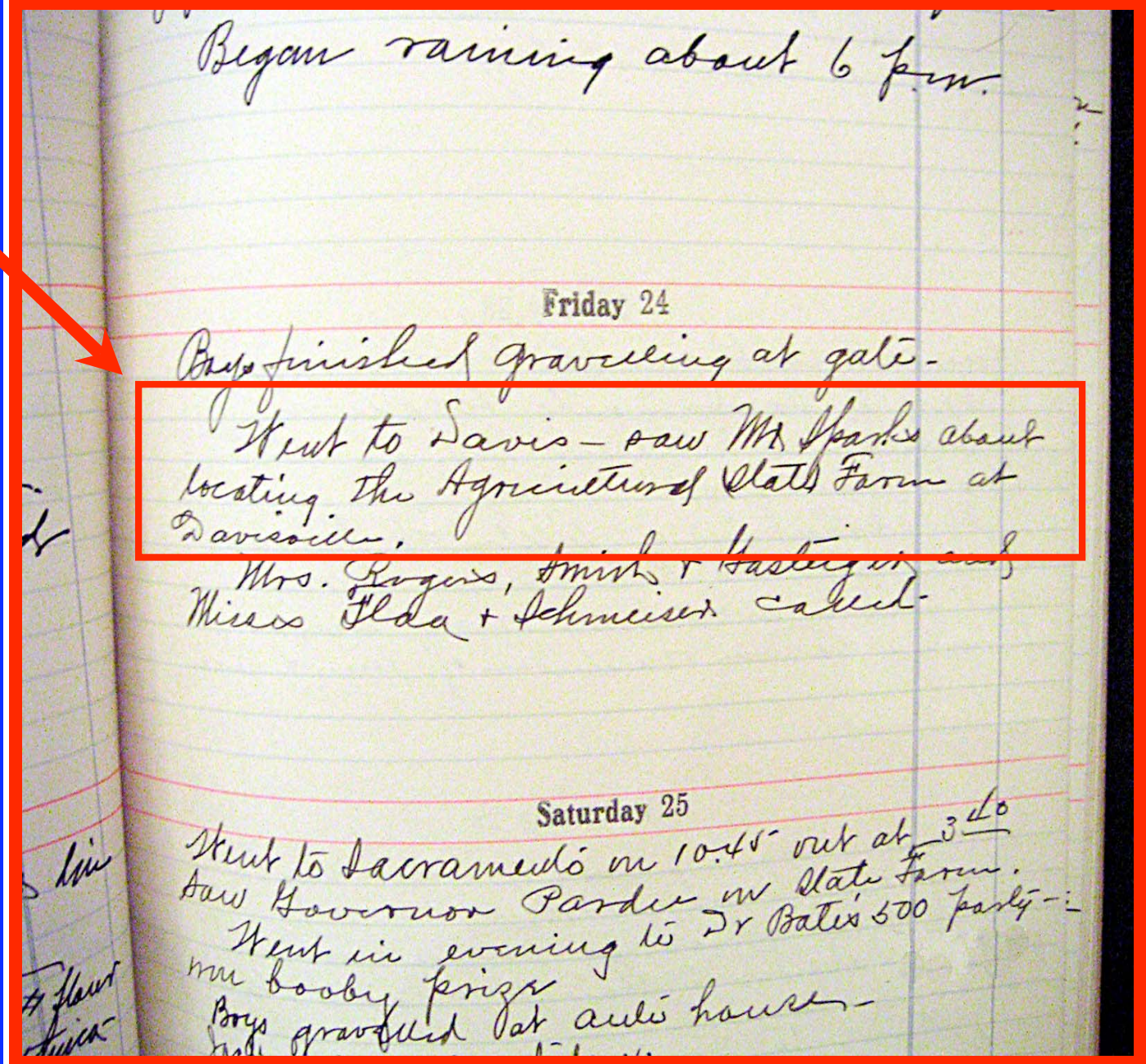
**MARTIN VAN BUREN
SPARKS**
(1832 - 1909)

wagon drawn by oxen. The expedition was a large one, embracing a combination of fourteen trains. The Indians proved very troublesome and en-

deavored to stampede the cattle, but the numerical strength of the emigrants enabled them to quell all disturbances without delay. When the party reached California they dispersed to various locations, Mr. Sparks settling in Wheatland, Yuba county, where he had 1600 acres of land. In 1882 he bought the Theodore Winters ranch at Winters. In 1888 he bought 788 acres near Davisville, which he sold in 1906 for a very large sum, forming the present state farm. In his community Mr. Sparks was known as an enterprising citizen, a capable business man and a staunch Democrat. For many years he held membership in the blue lodge of Masons. Since 1877 the family had made their home in Oakland, and in the residence on Sixteenth street in that city the death of Mr. Sparks occurred in August 1909, bringing to a close seventy-six useful and busy years."

Pierce journal entry reporting that on Friday March 24, he approached Sparks on the topic of selling his farm to become the State Farm.

This is six days **after** Governor Pardee had signed the Bill on Saturday, March 18 and six days **before** the historic "mass meeting" of Thursday, March 30 (column 6).



Twenty-four days after his private pledge to George Pierce (March 24) and 18 days after his public pledge at the mass meeting (March 30), Sparks gives Pierce a binding option (April 17).

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4/17/15

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS.

That M. V. Sparks, of Davisville, County of Yolo, State of California, is held and firmly bound unto Geo. W. Pierce, of same town, county and state, in the sum of Ten Thousand Dollars Gold Coin of the United States of America, to be paid to the said Geo. W. Pierce, his executors, administrators or assigns: for which payment, well and truly to be made I bind my heirs, executors and administrators firmly by these presents.

Sealed with my seal and dated the Seventeenth day of April, one thousand nine hundred and five.

THE CONDITION of the above obligation is such, that if the above bounden obligor shall, on or before the First day of September, A. D. one thousand nine hundred and five, make, execute and deliver unto the said Geo. W. Pierce (provided that the said Geo. W. Pierce shall on, or before that day have paid to the said obligor the sum of One Hundred and Twenty Dollars per acre, the price by said Geo. W. Pierce agreed to be paid therefor) a good and sufficient conveyance, with the usual covenants of all that certain lot piece or parcel of land, situate, lying and being in the counties of Yolo and Solano, and State of California, and bounded and particularly described as follows, to wit:- Bounded on the north by county road, on the East by the town of Davisville and the lands of H. Hamel, on the south by county road in Solano county and center of Putah Creek, on the west by lands of Jas. Campbell containing Seven Hundred and Twenty (720) acres, more or less.

It is further agreed and understood that said M. V. Sparks is to donate to the purchaser thirty six (36) shares of the capital stock of The Yolo County Consolidated Water Company, fully paid for, together with all the rights and privileges pertaining thereto. The grain crop of above described lands for season of 1905 is to remain the property of M. V. Sparks. Should a sale be consummated before the crop is harvested and the purchaser desire to erect buildings in the grain fields said purchaser shall have the right to occupy ten acres of said grain field and shall have the right of way to it. Should a sale be consummated on or before August first 1905, possession will be given September first 1905. Should a sale be consummated later possession will be given thirty days from date of sale, then this above obligation to be void, otherwise to remain in full force and virtue.

Signed, Sealed and Delivered M. V. Sparks Seal

in the presence of [Signature]