

THE HISTORICAL TIMES

NEWSLETTER OF THE GRANVILLE, OHIO, HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Fall 1996

Some Myths About Harmon-hyphen-Burke and Their Field

When the Granville Athletic Boosters on October 9, 1996 offered the Board of Education a project to move the playing facilities from Harmon-Burke to the high school, immediately they heard echoes of timeless myths about the names and ownership of this piece of ground.

Authentic data and even anecdotal recollections about the Harmon and Burke names seemed dimmed by the three-quarters of a century since the field was bought and built. Legal, moral, ethical considerations were hinted at — you can't just go around wiping out seventy years of community nomenclatural tradition like Harmon-Burke. Court records, high school yearbooks, and news-papers in the Denison archives helped clear up many of the misconceptions.

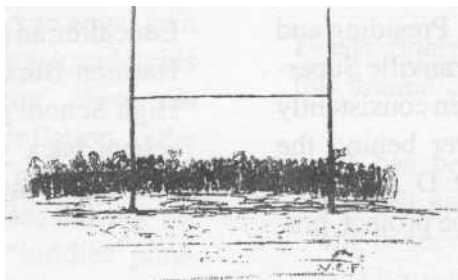
What were some of the name-myths encountered?

Shortly after moving to low spectators at sports field's name and mostly stare or a shrug — the Harmon-Burke, and all I was told the field was

named for two local lads killed in World War I — even to the dramatic addition that one was believed to be a pilot in the Lafayette Escadrille and the other a machine-gun platoon leader. It made a great sounding story if you consider the field was dedicated less than a decade after the "War to End All Wars," and especially if you're as big a sucker as I am for colorful local legends.

Later I was told a more prosaic tale that the names honored local residents who gave the land and paid for building the field. Close. Except that the same story included the most-often repeated and vaguely persistent of all legends, specifically: if ever those five acres cease to be a playing field the whole thing reverts to the heirs of Mr. Harmon and Mr. Burke. Apprehension faced the Athletic Boosters public proposal to move the field, as from many quarters that ownership legend rose to haunt the committee, asked by people who believed the myth just as I had. Legal research proved that myth to be false.

One more bothersome myth was repeatedly asserted that if the field is ever moved, the names of Mr. Harmon and Mr. Burke, by terms of the original sale, have to be moved with it. Another myth dissolved by consulting the records.



From the 1930 Blue and White

Harmon-Burke tered?

Granville I asked fel- events about the got a disinterested field was called ways has been. Once named for two local

G.E.M

70 YEARS LATER, ANOTHER "PLAYFIELD" CAMPAIGN

Granville high school's 1928 Homecoming on October 25 celebrated the official opening of the Harmon-Burke playing field. It was the proud culmination of four years of legal skirmishing, public fund appeals, national foundation awards, wide community support and countless hours of donated labors. The inaugural game on the new playing field was won by the Granville gridders as they blanked New Lexington 19-0.

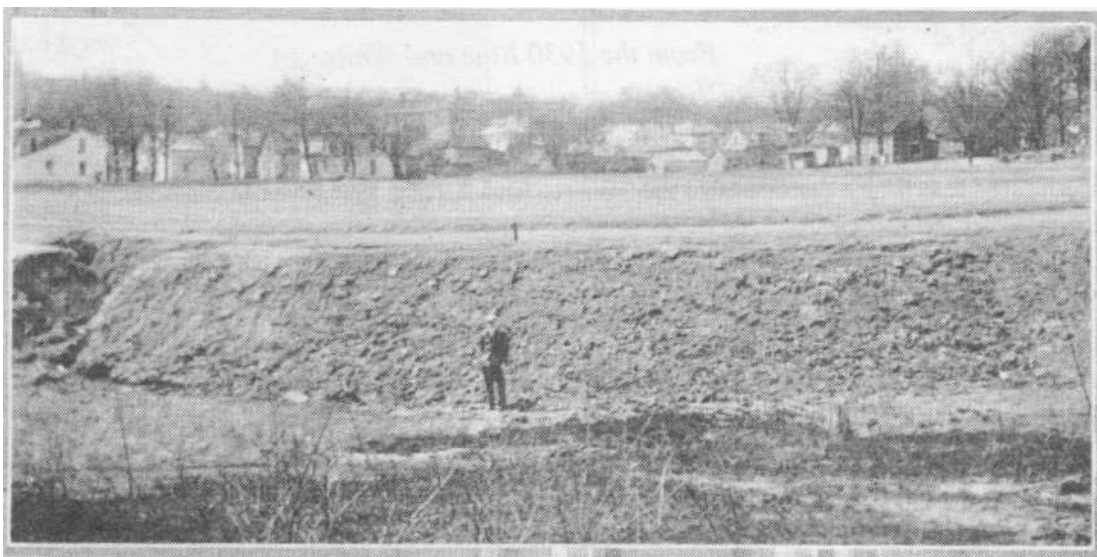
The game was scheduled at 2:30 p.m. and all local business houses were closed for the event. High school students decorated the town and the field. A large crowd stood through the game and during the extensive half-time program because the new bleachers had not yet been installed.

Dedicatory address was by the superintendent of Columbus schools, J. C. Collicott. Presiding and giving the welcome address was Granville Superintendent A. D. St.Clair who had been consistently praised in the press as the "power behind the throne" on the entire campaign. D. D. Deeds, as chair of the committee managing the project, pre-

sented the field to the community, and Mrs. Homer Price accepted it for Granville.

Speakers proudly mentioned that no public funds went into the Harmon-Burke playfield construction project. Gifts from individuals, foundations, businesses, and volunteer labor and in-kind contributions made the campaign a success. Writers described in retrospect the wonderful sight of local farmers contributing work of fifteen teams of horses pulling scrapers, geeing and hawing amidst Granville volunteer citizens wielding picks and shovels as they moved more than 10,000 cubic feet of earth, levelling and filling uneven terrain to make the running track and playing fields a reality.

Sixty-seven years later on October 9, 1995, the Granville Athletic Boosters offered the Board of Education an ambitious project to fund moving the Harmon-Burke playing field and track to the new High School grounds, away from the elementary school back yard. Boosters' president, Debbie Farrar, outlined for the Board an ambitious plan



Construction of the field meant moving a lot of dirt.

for developing a football-soccer field and nine-lane quarter-mile running track. The Boosters committee made its offer in confidence that Granville would, as it had seven decades back, again rise to the challenge and provide the community with its "field of dreams." In her request to the Board to accept "Moving Together" as a gift from the community she quoted from the 1928 high school yearbook:

"From a gully-washed meadow to a broad grassy plot, from a project to an achievement, from a dream to a reality, thus has our play field come into being. It is a community achievement. Labor, money, and plans came from the community and the co-operation shown during the completion of the field is amazing.

The Harmon-Burke campaign aimed originally for \$10,500 to pay for the land, and an equal sum for the improvements to provide a track and fields for football, baseball, and recreation. History is repeating itself, with a deep bow to inflation, as the 1996 Moving Together campaign goal set out to raise \$375,000 for similar facilities, but not including a baseball diamond or "kiddies playground" featured in the Harmon-Burke project. Notably the Moving Together volunteers of October 1996 echo more closely the professionally guided organization formed seventy years earlier in October 1926 as a community-wide committee to provide private resources to build Harmon-Burke field.

The 1926 Granville Playground Association formed a committee "chosen to have charge of the project (consisting of) Mesdames J.S.Graham, A.P.Nichol, and E.H.Smith, and Messrs. F. D. Barker, D.D.Deeds, H. W. Deming, J.D. Evans, John Geach, J.A.Huston, H.C.Price, and C.B.Slack.....with the following officers, President, D. D. Deeds; Secretary, Mrs. E. H. Smith; Treasurer, Miss Addie Slack. Captains and corn-

mittees were selected covering the entire school district and in a week four thousand dollars had been pledged in money and labor."

Their job was to guide the fund-raising efforts and scrutinize any expenditures, according to Deeds, "in a businesslike manner.

The money raised was deposited in the bank and not a penny expended except by vouchers which had to be signed by the president and countersigned by the treasurer before they would be honored by the bank." Deeds also reported the widespread acknowledgment that "to Superintendent St.Clair goes the lion's share of the credit for Granville's playground."

Deeds' final report to the community finished with this dramatic paragraph:

"It has been a pleasure to serve with so capable and congenial a committee; gratifying to serve so public-spirited a community and it is with mingled joy and sadness that we turn over to the Granville Public Schools Harmon-Burke field costing over \$20,000 and absolutely free from any incumbrance whatsoever except our debt of gratitude to those who made it possible."

The Playfield Campaign

Raising just over \$10,000 to pay for the five acres and an equal amount to level and grade the fields and track meant the committee needed both substantial cash and extensive in-kind contributions. When the land became available in 1924 (see below) the fund campaign began with community benefit events, football games, movies and any way the volunteers could raise money. Before the campaign was over, the Parent-Teacher Associa-



tion had pledged four hundred dollars, business men planned to raise much more, Professor Bennett from Denison had a force of men at work preparing a survey, laying out the fields and track. Farmers donated time and their teams. Workers of all skills joined the volunteer efforts. One of the community plays netted over \$200 with a similar amount coming from the senior class play proceeds. Some individual gifts were noted, several anonymous local \$500 gifts were added to an exceptional donation of \$1,000 from J. S. Jones.

The Harmon-Burke name for the new playfield honored two substantial contributors whose generosity and support the Playing Field Committee decided deserved a special kind of recognition. Charles Burke and his wife Lorena of New York gave \$1,000 toward the purchase of the land and a similar amount for construction. Prizes in two successive nationwide Harmon Award competitions (1927 and 1928) gave not only a tangible financial boost, but also the intangible public acclaim which added significantly to the momentum of the playfield campaign.

William E. Harmon

William E. Harmon was born in Lebanon, OH, in 1862 and attended both Normal U in Lebanon and Louisville School of Medicine before moving to New York to found a highly profitable business in developing suburban real estate around 26 different American cities before concentrating on New York. In the early 1920's the Harmon Foundation, established for "charitable and humanitarian purposes", conducted annual national competitions for communities to encourage community local ef-

orts in the construction of a playgrounds and recreation facilities.

Granville submitted the winning entry for Ohio in 1927 and received the \$1,000 first prize. Sidney village won second and received \$500. There were reportedly over 100 applicants nationwide in the contest. Thirty-nine playgrounds located in twenty states won awards that year with 15 Ohio communities winning \$3,050, or more than half of the \$5,900 the Foundation gave that year all over the country. The Harmon Foundation, with Harmon's roots in Lebanon, appeared to be quite partial to Ohio projects.

Granville went back the next year with its success story, illustrated with "Kodak photos", of community effort for their "playfield". This time they won third prize amounting to an additional \$300.

News releases from the Harmon Foundation in 1927 reported that Ohio at that time had a total of 77 "Harmon Fields." The same year Granville



William E. Harmon with his children

won first prize and Sidney second, the Foundation announced that Paulding and Wauseton won \$250; Bellefontaine, \$200; Lebanon, \$150; Bluffton, Fremont, and Wapakoneta, \$100 each; Bucyrus, Franklin, Wellsville, West Carrollton, \$75 each; with Fostoria and Miamisburg each was awarded \$50. The year before, Wapakoneta had won the first award with Bluffton second, so it was not unusual for towns to come up winners for more than one year.

The *Harmon News Bulletin* mailed from the Foundation in 1927 contained this tribute to Granville's winning entry: "Systematic procedure both in laying plans for development and in the execution by local groups of business men, high school students, farmers, and members of the Parent-Teacher Association and the Board of Education, was the keynote of the success gained by Granville, Ohio."

There is no record of William Harmon ever having direct contact with Granville except through the close connection with his proteges, the Burke brothers, Charles and Edmund, which one source calls his second cousins.⁶ Typically the correspondence and the contest materials were sent to the Foundation's Division of Playgrounds Director Mary Beattie Brady in New York. Harmon died in New York July 15, 1928; only a few months before Granville dedicated the "playfield" bearing his name.

Harmon's belief that "One owes something tangible to the place of his nativity" guided a lifetime of highly significant generosity to the town of Lebanon, Ohio. Among his early gifts were Harmon Park, an elaborate community playfield center which he gave in 1912. Harmon Hall, dedicated also in 1912, has been operated as a county museum by the Warren County Historical Society since 1961.⁶ It is possible that his interest in a competitive national network of Harmon playing fields, supported by the Harmon Foundation which he initiated in 1921, may have come from his personally rewarding philanthropic ex-

periences in Lebanon.

Charles Felix Burke

Charles Felix Burke, a native of Bethel, Ohio, and a 1904 graduate of Denison, was subsequently a long-term and creative member of the Denison Board of Trustees. Very philanthropic minded, he

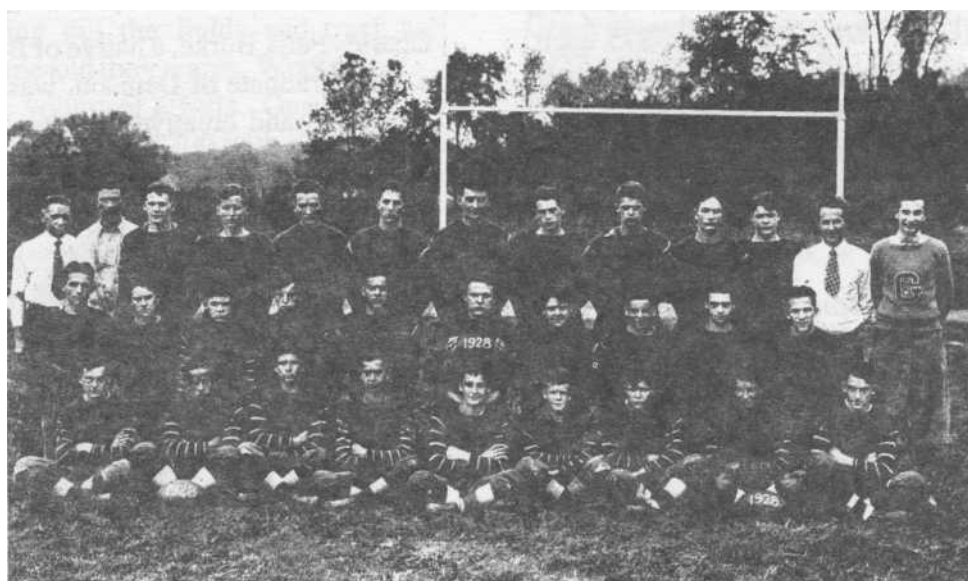


Charles F. Burke

was the initiator of among other giving ideas, the Committee for Gifts and Bequests, which has served the college so well for many years.

His equally talented and generous wife, Lorena Woodrow Burke, Denison graduate of 1906, was elected to the Board after her husband's death. (The Lorena Woodrow Burke chair in Denison University's Department of English is named for this famous alumna. Historical Society members Tony Stoneburner and Paul Bennett held the chair

BLUE AND WHITE
1929



FOOTBALL TEAM

FIRST ROW, left to right—Howard Bailey, James Johnson, David Beveridge, Edwin Roberts, Howard Bigelow, Paul Ebaugh, Clyde McLaughlin, Dwight White, and James Bailey.

SECOND ROW—Edmund Yingling, George Stuart, Robert Moore, Hubert Foster, Richard Price, Kirk Piper, Lawrence Lloyd, Arthur Kennedy, Ross Jones, Bill Evans.

THIRD ROW—Coach Williams, Assistant Coach Ashbrook, Walter Rogers, John Mears, Philip Young, Charles Kirby, Karl Weber, Robert Lloyd, John Shepard, George Knox, Ernest Spring, Assistant Manager Paul Heddleson, and Manager Paul Ashbrook.

FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

Granville - - - - -	25	October	5	Gambier - - - - -	6
Granville - - - - -	12	October	19	Delaware - - - - -	13
Granville - - - - -	19	October	25	New Lexington_	0
Granville - - - - -	0	November	1	Gahanna - - - - -	6
Granville - - - - -	12	November	9	Bremen - - - - -	7
Granville - - - - -	6	November	16	St. Charles__	6

Early and provident fear is the mother of safety—Burke

Page Fifty-seven

The 1928 Granville High School Team which was victorious over New Lexington High School (19 to 0) on dedication day, October 25, 1928.

in recent years.) Burke Hall on the lower campus was donated by Charles' brother Edmund, a business partner in New York real estate development.

Both Burke brothers got their start in real estate working for the William Harmon company for many years, building up areas in Chicago, Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, and Detroit before starting their own highly successful New York real estate development company, Edmund G. and Charles F. Burke, Inc.

Charles, with his close association with Denison and the community, felt that Granville was his home. On his death January 21, 1937 at the age of 56 a memorial service was held on January 24 in the Riverside Church in New York City where he was a member, and following that service, the body was brought to Granville and on January 25 services were held in the Kappa Sigma house on the Denison campus.

Charles Burke was buried in Granville's Maple Grove Cemetery. A lengthy obituary, written by fellow alumnus and trustee Frank B. Amos, appeared in the January 23, 1937 *New York Times*. A biography in the Denison *Alumnus* ended with the comment, "In death he returns to the college town he so deeply loved."

The Legal Hurdles

Acquisition of the five acres of land behind the old high school property fronting on Granger Street, and which was to become Harmon-Burke Field was neither simple nor inexpensive.

Owners of those acres were known to be planning to subdivide the property into building lots. The school desperately needed space for recreation and for possible future expansion of facilities. The Board of Education in November 1923 passed a resolution to appropriate the still undivided properties, and on February 8, 1924 went to court to claim those privately held properties for public use.

Defendants in that first action were named as George Williams, Howard Williams, Alma Tight, Otto S. Jones, Elizabeth C. Clemens, and Ida G. Jones. After a month of legal bickering the Board of Education offered the three primary landholders (George and Howard Williams and Alma Tight) a sum of \$5,000 to settle the case.

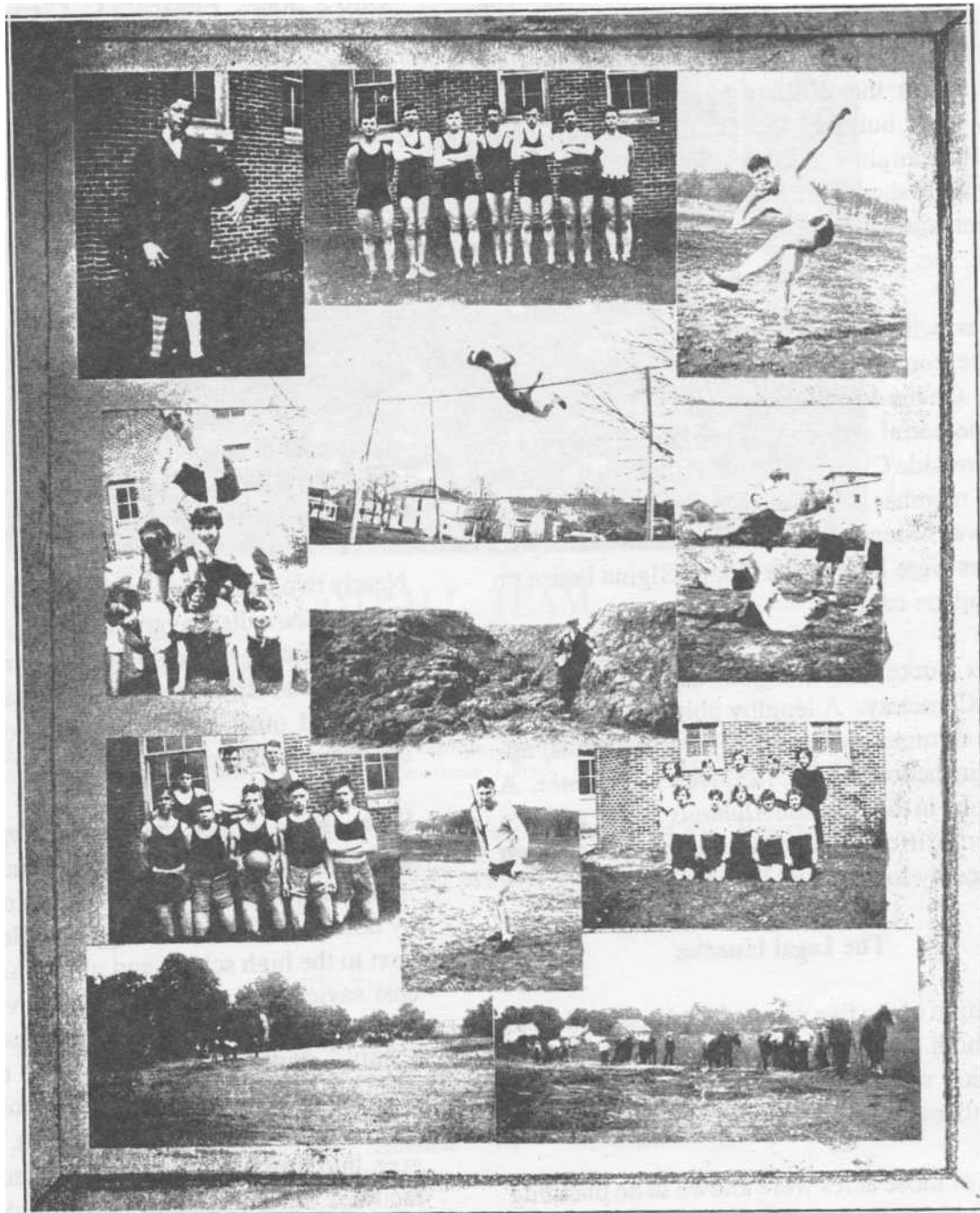
The offer was not accepted and a jury, empanelled in March 1924, awarded the defendants a total of \$10,000, doubling the earlier offer from the Board of Education. Condemnation giving the disputed five acres to the schools was issued in September. Then on December 17, 1924 the Board of Education filed an appeal for a new trial which was summarily overruled by Judge Harvey Alexander and the Board was ordered to pay the amount established at the jury trial the previous March.

Nearly two years later, in October 1926 the newly formed Granville Playground Association accepted the challenge not only to build a recreational facility but also to raise funds to pay for the five acres and other associated costs of the court's condemnation decision.

Seven decades later, the Moving Together volunteers have a simpler task since the land for the field is already part of the school and need not be taken by condemnation. Moving the athletic activities next to the high school and middle school is both cost-saving and convenient. By Moving Together vacating the Harmon-Burke area, nearly a third of a million dollars was saved which the Board of Education would have spent for another elementary site acquisition and preparation. That saving goes into immediately improving middle school facilities, and into a band room improvement at the high school —indicating the far-reaching effect of what began as an athletic project.

After fifteen generations of high school students have performed there, the Harmon-Burke facility has become embarrassingly inadequate even though football and soccer games and practices still are

BLUE AND WHITE



A miscellany of photographs of construction and events on Harmon-Burke Field from the 1930 Blue and White

held there. The Harmon-Burke 6-lane cinder running track, pride of 1928 technology, eventually proved impossible to maintain or use and has been abandoned for a decade — the last home track meet for Granville high school was in 1985 against Heath.

In the absence of individual donors of the philanthropic leadership of the 1920's Harmon and Burkes there are no compellingly clear candidates to have their names on the 1996 Moving Together project. Rather, the entire community — citizens and businesses and professionals — have pledged the funds, in-kind, and the volunteer labor to accomplish all over again for Granville youth what the "playfield" committee did beginning in 1924.

We may lament the fact that the playfield, dedicated with such fervor and ceremony in 1928, has become obsolete and will disappear.

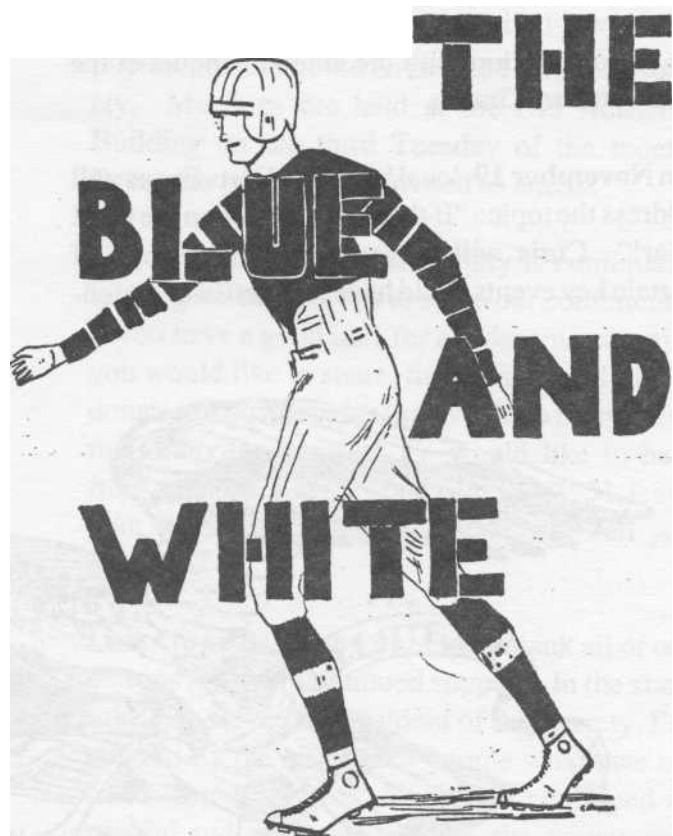
What did not go out of style since the `twenties, and what will not disappear, however, is a successful appeal to citizens' pride replicating itself in the Moving Together campaign. It's a resurgence of the commitment and spirit which touched Harmon, Burkes and their 1926 peers seventy years ago, flowing again through the greater Granville community.

By G. E. Myers
Granville Historical Society

The writer acknowledges extensive help from Richard Daly, Flo Hoffman, Wes Sargent, Jim Ormond and many others in providing research and background data

Footnotes

- ¹ The Blue and White, 1928, p. 47.
- ² The Blue and White, 1930, p. 72.
- ³ *ibid.*, p.72
- ⁴ *ibid.*, p.73
- ⁵ Woodrow, John F., and Lorena Woodrow Burke, *Our Kith and Kin*, Denison University Press, 1948, p. 224.
- ⁶ Information taken from an undated brochure on William E. Harmon by Hazel Spence Phillips, Museum Director, Warren County Historical Society, courtesy of Don Darfuss.
- ⁷ Data taken from proceedings of Licking County Probate Court 1924, pp. 332-339.



*Cover artwork from the December 1922
Blue and White*

Civil War Roundtable

Announces Programs For 8th Season

Kevin Bennett, the chair of the CWRT Program sponsored by the Society, announces the schedule of events for the fall. This begins the eighth year of Roundtable discussions. Kevin has assembled a slate of interesting and diverse presentations. The Roundtable meets at the Old Academy Building at Elm and South Main Streets on the third Tuesday of each month at 7:30 p.m.

The fall series began in September with Granville resident Tom Mellot speaking about Nathan Bedford Forrest's greatest victory and its impact on the war in the west. The October meeting will be in conjunction with the annual banquet at the Presbyterian Church.

On **November 19**, local historian Chris Evans will address the topic: "If the South Had Won the Civil War!" Chris will explore how the change of certain key events could have resulted in a Confed-

erate victory and how a post war Dixie would have changed world events.

On **December 17**, Roundtable member and Grant enthusiast Nancy Winkler will consider this popular but little understood Ohio Civil War general. Nancy's emphasis will be on the post-war years. Her title: "The Last Campaign—The Life of Ulysses S. Grant."

In the spring series of the Roundtable, Kevin announces that presentations will consider the last Civil War Veterans in Licking County, ironclad naval warfare, and a discussion of a tragic episode from Gettysburg, Farnsworth's charge.

Kevin notes that there are still two open spots in the spring schedule. If you are interested in making a presentation or have suggestions about a program, please contact Kevin at 587-4517.





From the President's Desk

Don't forget to mark your calendars! Our annual Business Meeting Dinner will be held at 6:30 p.m. at the Granville Presbyterian Church on October 15th. Thanks to Maggie Brooks and the Cambrian Society, we will be treated to a Welsh evening. Our speaker will be the past president of the National Welsh American Foundation, Colonel Alfred Reese. Our meal will have a Welsh flavor too. Reservations are necessary and the cost is \$12.00. Join us for a delightful evening, reflecting on the contributions of Welsh people to Granville and our society.

...

We had a great turn-out for our recent program entitled "What Bill Utter Forgot to Tell Us: the Story of Catholicism in Early Ohio." Sixty people came to hear Tony Lisska speak of the contributions of early Catholic clergy and their influence on the young state of Ohio. Stay tuned to your *Historical Times* and the *Granville Sentinel* for continued great programming by your Granville Historical Society.

...

Under the programming direction of Kevin Bennett, the Civil War Roundtable continues to be a very

popular feature of the Granville Historical Society. Meetings are held at the Old Academy Building on the third Tuesday of the month. Everyone interested is invited to attend.

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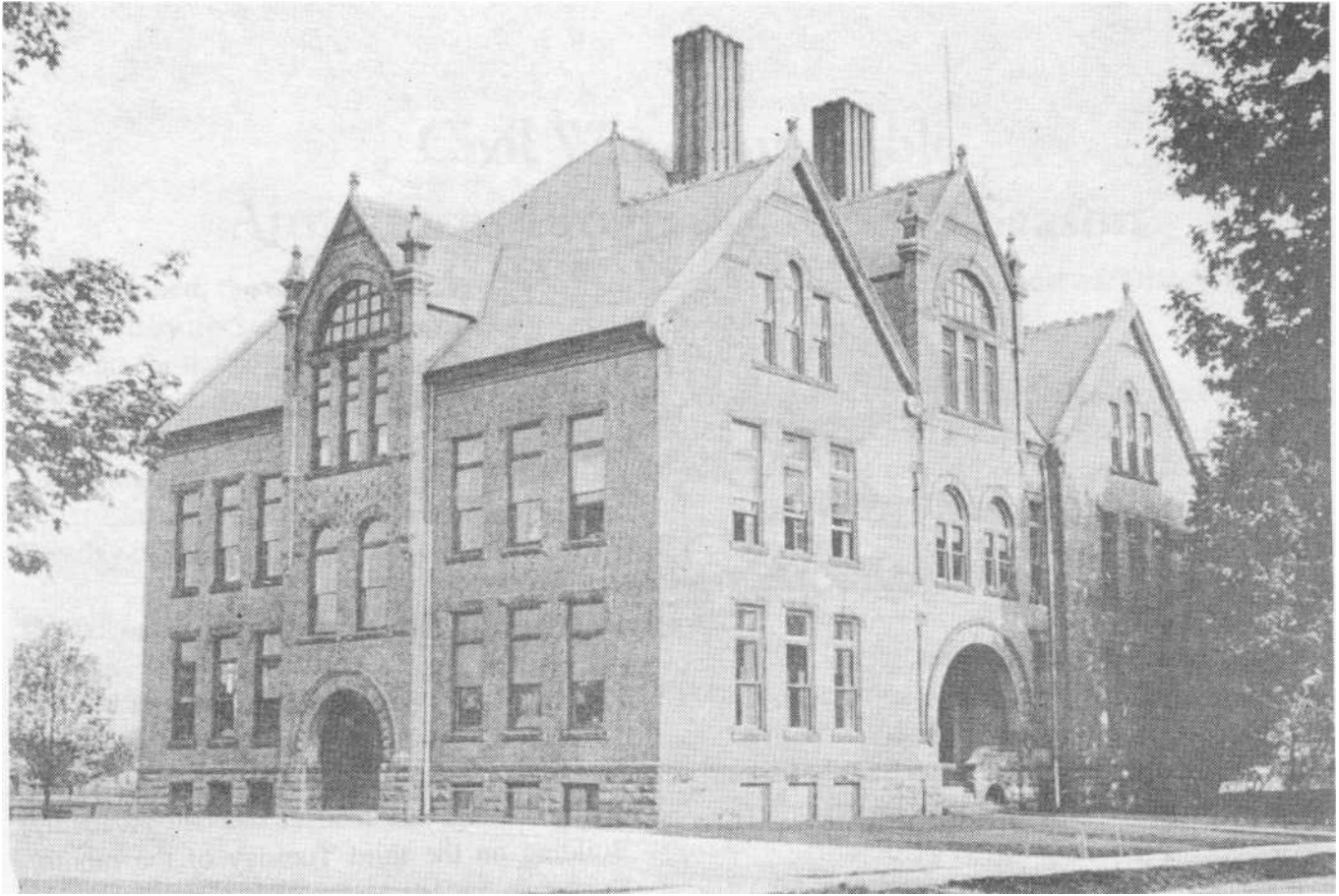
The Granville Historical Society is continually looking for better ways to serve our community. If you have a good idea for a program, expertise you would like to share, time you would like to donate, or any thoughts that will help us preserve the Granville heritage, we would like to hear from you. Just call the Society at 587-3951, leave your name and number, and we will call you back.

...

I want to take this opportunity to thank all of our patrons for their continued support. In the short time I've served as President of the Society, I'm amazed by the number of people who have offered their assistance. With your continued financial and volunteer support, the society will continue to grow, enrich, and be enriched by those who uphold our traditions.

MANY THANKS!

Dick Daly
 President
 Granville Historical Society



From the Archives...

Granville Union School, 1889 - 1951

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*This is the Fourth Issue of Our
Tenth Anniversary Year
for the
Historical Times*

*We hope that the members of the Society
have enjoyed our special expanded format*

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or queries to:*

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