

THE HISTORICAL TIMES

NEWSLETTER OF THE GRANVILLE, OHIO, HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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THE KU KLUX KLAN IN LICKING COUNTY

THE 1920'S KKK RALLIES AT BUCKEYE LAKE



Often historical articles are written to edify and to remind us of the hardships and duty with which our ancestors undertook their daily activities in order to help make Granville and Licking County a pleasant and joyful place in which to live. Yet history can also help us recall both the foibles and the moral pitfalls of our communal past. This issue of THE HISTORICAL TIMES directs our attention toward several years in the 1920's during which intolerance and xenophobia ruled the everyday lives of too many Licking County residents. The wave of intolerance which crested in the mid-west, especially in Ohio and Indiana, witnessed large membership lists in the Ku Klux Klan. Both mid-western men and women embarked upon activities suggesting severe lapses in the moral rectitude and the abandonment of those "salt of the earth" virtues which often characterize the mid-west. Licking County was part of this xenophobic hysteria which was not only racist but anti-Semitic, anti-Catholic and generally nativist and anti-foreign born. It is unclear why all of this happened in the 1920's. But it did happen, and a large national expression of this twentieth-century "know-nothingism" occurred in Licking County on the shores of Buckeye Lake with the 1923 and 1925 KKK rallies. [Photograph: Licking County Historical Society]

The Buckeye Lake KKK Rallies

The furor surrounding the 1994 Ku Klux Klan rally in downtown Newark suggests that once again local public interest has been aroused by Klan activities. Often residents in this area of the country tend to dismiss the Klan as an organization peculiar to the South. It was, after all, in the southern states where the Ku Klux Klan was initially organized in the aftermath of the Civil War. Few are aware, however, that in the early and middle 1920s, both Newark in particular and Licking County in general were hotbeds of Klan activity. During this time, several of the largest KKK rallies ever conducted in this country took place at Buckeye Lake. Moreover, in this area, the Klan was powerful politically and even controlled many city and county government positions.

The Klan of the 1920s was (like its modern-day successor) an intolerant fraternal society composed of white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants. Unlike the earlier KKK, which was formed almost exclusively by Southern whites as a backlash to Yankee carpetbagger rule, the "new" klan of the 1920s solicited membership in all parts of the country. The Klan was immensely successful in attracting active members during this period, especially in the midwest.

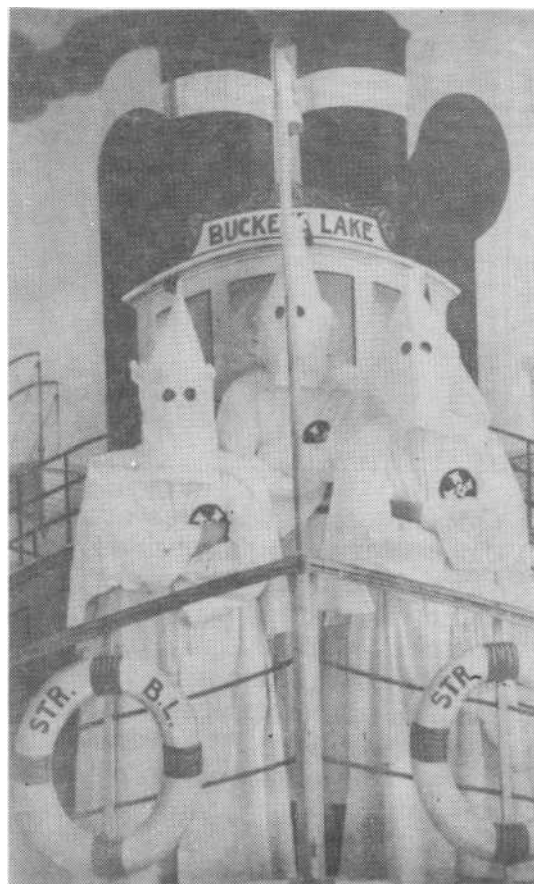
Appealing to racial and religious prejudices and increased competition for jobs and housing, the Klan played upon the fears of the local population to the growing numbers of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe who with their different cultures and religion competed with the established population in the tightening job market.

The 1923 Meeting

The KKK in Licking County became a significant movement in the early 1920s. At its peak, it registered more than 3,000 members within the

county, with many more belonging to the women's organization, the Kamellias. The strength of the local Klan and Buckeye Lake's facilities and entertainment together with its central location were factors in its selection as the site of its statewide meeting (konclave) scheduled for July 12, 1923. It was preceded by massive publicity in most major newspapers in the state as well as the Klan magazine, the *Klan Courier*.

In light of the large crowds anticipated, the local Klan cooperated closely with the management of Buckeye Lake park in setting up the event. Special arrangements were made for erecting impressive speakers stands, decorations and a large circus tent where special Klan programs were to be held.



Extensive fire and storm damage from the previous year was quickly repaired. Coordination was also made with the Columbus, Newark and Zanesville Interurban for special train service to transport participants to Buckeye Lake. The Licking County Klan also was asked to arrange for adequate parking for those driving to the event.

Konklave Drew National Leaders

The konklave drew a large number of national KKK figures, including H.E. Evans, the Imperial Wizard from Atlanta. The rally drew a crowd estimated at 75,000 people. According to the *Newark Leader*, the roads leading to Buckeye Lake were filled with automobiles all day and the interurban train did a tremendous business. It was also reported that lodging was impossible to obtain in the local area. Hooded and robed guides were stationed with Sheriff's deputies at all roads leading to the lake providing directions and assistance.

The day's events consisted of a number of speeches by national KKK figures, including the infamous D.C. Stephenson from Indiana, who claimed that the Buckeye Lake Konklave "was the greatest KKK gathering yet." Stephenson had a summer home at Buckeye Lake, which may explain the site selection for the massive meeting. Stephenson further noted that Ohio led the Union in the number of its Klansmen and Kamellias and urged them to combat the "threat of pagan civilization" and "to restore the government of this country to the plan upon which it was founded by our forefathers."

Later in the evening, an elaborate initiation ceremony for 1,700 new members was held. Preceded by three bands from Columbus, Dayton and Newark blaring "Onward Christian Soldiers," the initiates were escorted to a specially constructed altar flanked by 40-foot, electrically illuminated crosses. At the climax of the ceremony, a 50-foot cross located on the crest of a nearby hill was set afire and thousands of robed Klansmen formed into a human cross with lights and fire candles.

The konklave ended with a midnight fireworks show launched from barges in the lake. The most impressive display was a large "KKK" superimposed on an American flag with shells bursting around it.

The rally took place with little or no incident. News reports indicate that state prohibition agents made a raid on the "Blue Goose" and the owner was arrested for possessing and selling liquor to errant Klansmen. One fatality occurred when an elderly Klansman from Columbus succumbed to a heart attack aggravated by the 90 degree summer heat.

The Mayor of Newark

After this rally, the local Klan continued to grow and muster political strength. In the 1923 local elections, an independent candidate with Klan backing, H.N. Stevens, handily won election as Newark's mayor. Other Klan backed candidates won election to city council and county offices. Stevens was one of the early leaders of the Klan. During his two terms as mayor, between 1924 and 1928, his activities provided constant news fodder for area newspapers. A sampling of news stories show Mayor Stevens being sued for false imprisonment; an affidavit of lunacy being filed in



Grand Dragon D.C. Stephenson maintained a **summer home at Buckeye Lake,**

court against him; and for soliciting bribes as mayor. When he was taken into custody on the bribery charge, an additional charge was filed, that of carrying concealed weapons. It seems that Stevens was apprehended with a revolver strapped to his hip, a revolver strapped to his chest, a .22 pistol in his pocket, along with a blackjack.

Notwithstanding this behavior, it appears that the local Klan did not engage in any widespread campaign of violence. There was no indication of beatings or other forms of racial intimidation. Rather, the local Klan for the most part, was comprised of respectable middle class families who joined the Klan for business or political reasons or simply because of their fear of a rapidly changing industrial society. This is not to suggest that prejudices did not exist or were not acted upon in areas of employment or housing.

The 1925 Meeting

In light of the success of the 1923 rally, the Ohio Klan elected to stage another konklave at Buckeye Lake in August 1925. This gathering also drew large crowds (variously estimated at 75,000 to 100,000) along with over 200 national potentates of the KKK. Announced as the greatest Klan gathering in American history, this event stretched over a four-day period.

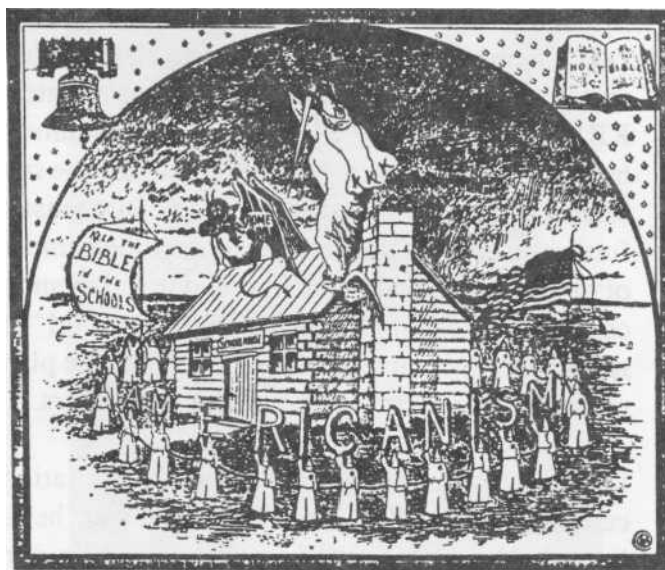
Various national Klan figures spoke at the event uniformly railing against evolution science and the immigration laws. The evolution issue was particularly hot as the Scopes "Monkey Trial" had taken place earlier that summer in Dayton, Tennessee. Mayor Stevens of Newark was also a speaker at the konklave. Along with the standard Klan ceremonies, a number of "Klan weddings" were performed as well as an elaborate skit on the American "Sodom and Gomorrah." Like the 1923 konklave, the event occurred without serious incident or disruption.

Embezzlement and Disarray

Following the 1925 konklave, the Klan continued to flourish both nationally and locally for several years. By the late 1920s, however, the Klan's power began to deteriorate rapidly, due in part to a series of financial and personal scandals involving members in national leadership positions. Embezzlement and misappropriation of funds by national officers resulted in many lawsuits. The national Klan eventually was placed into receivership. The leading figure of the midwest Klan, D.C. Stephenson, was indicted and convicted of rape and murder.

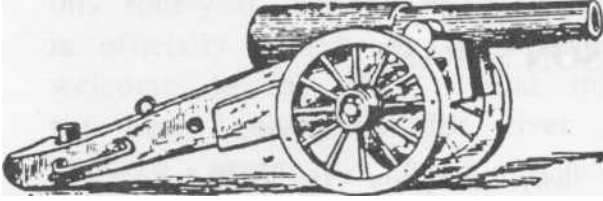
The disarray at the national level percolated down to the local level. Mayor Stevens was arrested for assault to commit rape. By 1928 the Klan had virtually disappeared as a local political force.

B. Kevin Bennett
Granville Historical Society



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A favorite target of the Klan propoganda in the midwest were the parochial schools.



CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

Board of Management member Kevin Bennett will lead the Civil War Roundtable. Kevin is a published historian of Civil War matters and has given several informative and enthusiastic presentations to our Roundtable in the past. The Society is pleased that Kevin has kindly volunteered to watch over the Roundtable activities.

Kevin announced the following schedule of Roundtable meetings for the first part of this year's program; the meetings will take place at 7:30 P.M. on the third Tuesday of the month in the Old **Academy Building**, South Main and Elm Streets.

October 24, 1995: "Return to Jackson: The Finishing Stroke to the Vicksburg Campaign."

Local Civil War authority Chris Evans will give his presentation on this little known but significant campaign in Mississippi led by General William T. Sherman.

November 21, 1995: "Colleges in Ohio during the Civil War"

G. Wallace Chessman will discuss his research in this area.

December 19, 1995: "The Battle of Brandy Station."

Noted local Civil War historian Eric Whittenburg discusses the largest cavalry engagement of the Civil War as well as current efforts to preserve the battlefield.

Spring, 1996: "An Ohio Confederate The Curious Career of General Roswell Ripley."

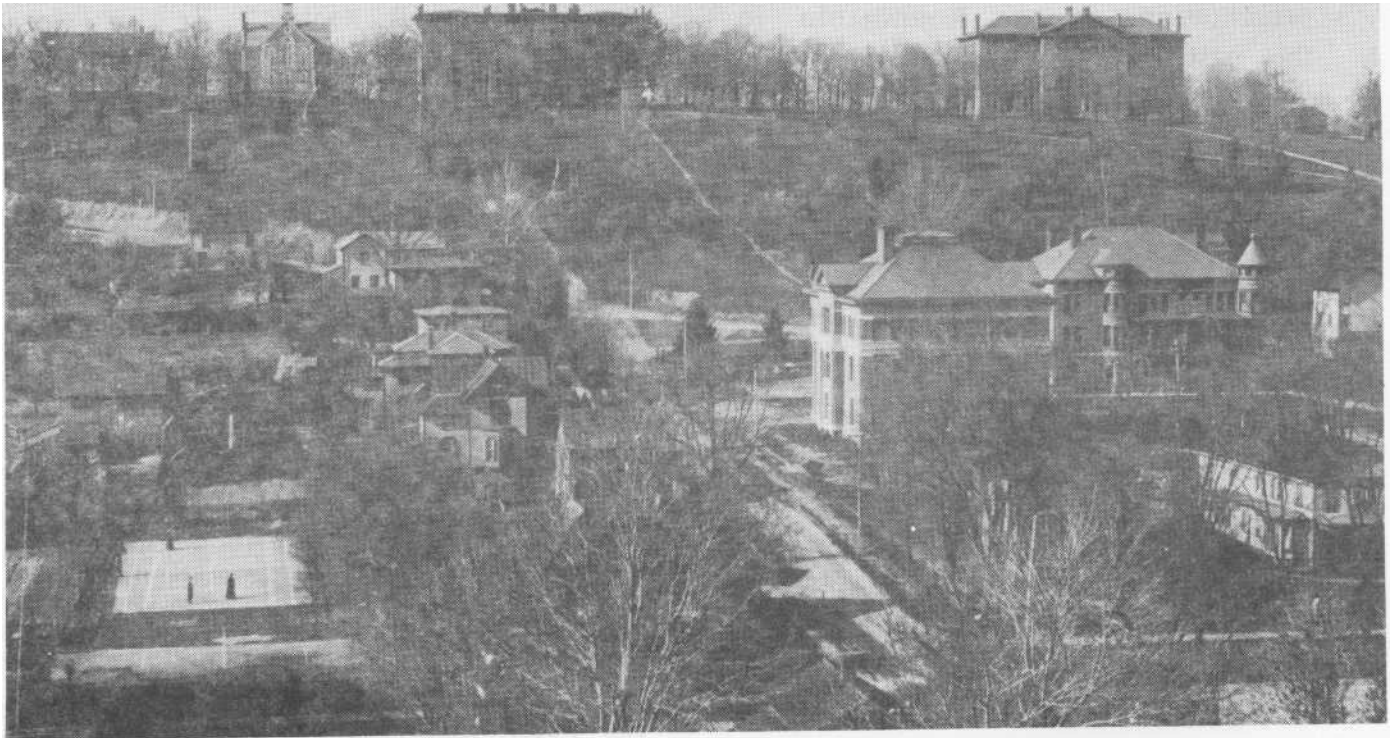
Dr. Chet Bennett, active with the Ohio Sons of Confederate Veterans, will talk on the career of Worthington, Ohio, native, Roswell Ripley. This Ohio Confederate saw service at the Battle of Fort Sumter and was a key commander in the Siege of Charleston.

Kevin announced that other spring Roundtable events will consist of a debate on the merits of General George McClellan, a dramatic recreation of the role of women in the Civil War, and a discussion of anti-war activity in Central Ohio.

The final spring schedule will be sent to all members on the Roundtable Mailing List in December.

COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY? A LOOK AT DENISON'S PAST

Newcomers to Granville often ask why Denison is called a "university" when indeed it is a four-year undergraduate college of the liberal arts. Long time Society member and Denison historian, G. Wallace Chessman, has written the following account about this issue.



Denison University as it appeared in the late 1800's.

If you have ever wondered why this four-year college in Granville is officially named a "university," welcome to the club! That title has been questioned for over a hundred years by many people, and some influential observers would still like to see a change back to "college." How did this problem arise?

Well, back in the early 1850's, when Granville College was to be renamed in honor of William S. Denison's substantial \$10,000 pledge to the \$125,000 endowment drive, the trustees decided to adopt the title "university" as well.

Today that word usually signifies an institution that offers graduate as well as undergraduate training, but in those years before the Civil War that definition was not yet fixed. So in making this change, Denison's board members apparently desired to indicate simply that in addition to the two *old* departments--preparatory and collegiate--there would now be two *new* ones, namely, the *scientific* [for the B.S. degree] and the *agricultural* [for the sons of farmers and for farmers themselves].

As one Ohio Baptist paper put it, Denison's trustees just wanted "to make it, as far as possible, a seminary for all departments of instruction, literary, scientific or

religious--in a word, that it is to be a university."

The agriculture department soon closed down, but the three-year course in the sciences proved so popular that by 1861 ten men had received Denison's new Bachelor of Science degree. Indeed, by 1886-7, scientific instruction and research had become so strong that three "resident graduates" were pursuing advanced studies here.

Recognizing the importance of this development, Denison's new president, the Reverend Galusha Anderson [1887-89], got trustee approval to grant Master's degrees for one year's resident [or two year's nonresident] graduate study under the direction of Denison's faculty. And down into the 1920's, Denison continued to award M.A. or M.S. diplomas.

Anderson's successor, Daniel A. Purinton [1889-1901] promoted the "university" image even more vigorously. Faculty began to offer "extension courses" in nearby cities in 1891; three-year sequences in biology and philosophy leading to the Ph.D. degree were approved in 1892-93; and in 1900, the board agreed to organize the institution into six departments: Granville College [for men], Shepardson College [for women], Doane Academy [preparatory], The Conservatory of

Music, The School of Art, and The School of Military Science.

That marked the high point in this "university" development, for the next president, the Reverend Emory Hunt, D.D. [1901-13], was just as eager to make Denison "a first-class college in every respect." The doctorate program quietly disappeared along with the university extension courses. The School of Military Science closed in 1903. And in 1907 the faculty even requested the trustees to change the name to "Denison College."

In response, the board admitted that the term "university," as applied to Denison, "has been in the past, is now, and probably will continue to be, for a considerable time at least, a misnomer." Yet they declined to change primarily "because of 'some color of a breach of faith' with earlier donors," so that title would survive even after the master's program was dropped, Doane Academy closed, and Denison in 1926-27 became essentially a four-year coeducational liberal arts college.

That term "college" would still grace the centennial plaque installed in 1931 at the foot of the Front Drag, but that's another chapter in this complex story.

The Editorial Board expresses its thanks to Wally Chessman for his

kind permission to reprint this fascinating historical account of the college/university designation for Denison. This narrative originally appeared in The Denisonian, the weekly student newspaper published on campus. It has been slightly edited for publication here.

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It is included
with
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to all members.

EDITORIAL BOARD

Maggie Brooks
Florence Hoffman
Anthony J. Lisska

Send comments,
suggestions and questions
about membership to

The Granville Historical Society
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Granville, OH 43023-0129



PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION PORTRAYS EARLY GRANVILLE

Dan Campbell once again provided the Society with a marvelous and well-crafted exhibition of early Granville photographs for the annual Fourth of July exhibition. This exhibition, held in the Old Academy Building, has become a wonderful part of the Fourth of July celebration in Granville. Dan has assembled a significant collection of enlargements from historical photographs and postcards which vividly portray the earlier days of our community.

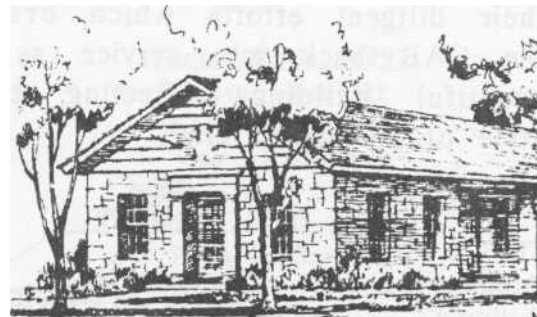
The Board of Management expresses gratitude to Society Vice-President Dan Campbell for once again providing the Granville Community with a visual history of earlier times.

**NOW IS THE TIME TO
CONSIDER RENEWING YOUR
MEMBERSHIP TO THE
GRANVILLE HISTORICAL
SOCIETY**

MUSEUM DRAWS MORE THAN ONE THOUSAND VISITORS

Gay Weinberg reports that during the 1995 season, April through October, more than one thousand visitors toured the Society's museum. Gay and her committee oversaw the refurbishing of the rear room of the museum; in addition, new carpet now graces the main sections of the building. During the summer months, the gardens in front of the museum displayed the glory of several varieties of flowers and shrubs. It was not too long ago that the area in front of the museum building resembled more a section of the hardscrabble frontier. Jim Siegel worked diligently on garden upkeep over the summer months.

The Board of Management offers thanks and appreciation to Gay and her museum committee for all of their enthusiastic work making the Society's collection available to the public, and to Jim for his hard work with the gardens.



115 East Broadway

THE OLD ACADEMY BUILDING
RADIANT ONCE AGAIN

The restoration and refurbishing project of the Old Academy Building (OAB) is now complete. Under the watchful eyes of Dick Mahard, Jim Siegel and Buck Sargent, the interior of the building has been restored to a state worthy of its historical significance. A new furnace, new sconces on the walls, new ceiling lights with fans, together with freshly painted and restored walls all combine to render the OAB a showplace historical building. Dick, Jim and Buck also have added picture molding on the walls so that many of the photographs depicting the rich history of our community can be seen by visitors to the building.

The Society's Civil War Roundtable will use the OAB for its meetings this year.

Dick, Jim and Buck all deserve our acknowledgment and thanks for their diligent efforts which bring the OAB back into service as a beautiful building reflecting the style of an earlier era.

The Old Academy Building, as it was constructed in 1833.



BOARD OF MANAGEMENT
"RETREATS" IN SUMMER HEAT

On Sunday, August 13, Society president Tom Martin chaired and hosted a retreat for the members of the Board of Management. This occasion provided the opportunity for the Board to consider its undertakings, reflect on its mission, discuss issues of importance for the commonweal of the society, and plan for the future.

Under Tom's direction, the Society has undertaken several initiatives designed to enhance general awareness of the history of our village. The retreat served as the occasion to discuss the role the Society needs to play in keeping alive the sense of history important to us all. Persons in charge of the standing committees of the Board reported on the goals and reflected on issues central to their work.

STANDING COMMITTEES AND
CHAIRS

Museum: Gay Weinberg and
Kay Koeninger

Burial Ground: Flo Hoffman
Civil War Roundtable:

Kevin Bennett

Membership: Dan Campbell

Program: Dick Shiels

Properties: Jim Siegel

Publications: Tony Lisska

Publicity: Tom Martin

OBELISKS RE-ERECTED BY
VOLUNTEERS AT OLD COLONY
BURIAL GROUND

Flo Hoffman reports that progress continues on the restoration of the Old Colony Burial Ground. Consultants Jim and Minxie Fannin from Concord, Massachusetts, spent two work periods in Granville this summer continuing their long term involvement with the restoration project.

The Fannins also visited the Holy Trinity Church Burial Ground in Somerset to assist with the restoration there following the terrible acts of vandalism which took place there last Spring.

In addition to ongoing maintenance and repair, volunteers, with the help of Jim and Minxie and workers and lifting equipment from Felumlee Monument Works in Newark, re-erected eight large obelisks at the east end of the cemetery. Look up the cemetery slope coming north into Granville and you will see the tops of the beautiful monuments.

The annual May appearance of the Old Colony Ghosts was shortened this year because of rain--even Ghosts are affected by a wet Granville May evening. Not to be totally deterred, however, the Ghosts appeared at the Old Academy Building to give accounts of life and death in 19th Century Granville.

The first phase of the Old Colony landscaping project has been completed, giving some definition to the south border of the cemetery.

The Board of Management acknowledges all of the commitment, effort and zeal which Flo Hoffman has given to help with the ongoing project of restoration of the Old Colony Burial Ground.

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Anthony Lisska

GRANVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
CELEBRATES A JUBILEE
ON AUGUST 26, 1995



**Photograph of 1802 Old Meeting House
from Granville, Massachusetts.**

Former Society Secretary Gretchen Rauschenberg represented the Granville Historical Society at the "Granville Jubilee" which took place on August 26, 1995, in Granville, Massachusetts. Gretchen was an officially invited guest at the Jubilee ceremonies and read a proclamation to our mother village in Massachusetts from her Ohio daughter village. Gretchen reports that the day was beautiful, the ceremony impressive and the occasion wonderful. She read the proclamation from a podium which was located under the portico of the 1802 Old Meeting House in Granville, Massachusetts.