

THE HISTORICAL TIMES

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The Story behind Our Lady of Mercy School

How 'Fassett's Folly' Acquired a New 'Mission'

THE MENTION OF BRYN MAWR brings to mind a gourmet meal in a gracious setting. Few, however, know much of the 136-year history of this magnificent mansion situated on a 375-acre tract on the Lancaster Road (Route 37), two and a half miles south of Granville. It has been largely forgotten that for 27 years it was home to a very special school known as Our Lady of Mercy.

In 1832, Elias Fassett acquired part of the tract from John Hilbrant, and the remainder nine years later from John Rathbone, a land speculator. Fassett had come out to Granville from Vermont in 1818, where he had been born in Bennington in 1797. Applying his talents to finance and banking, he soon proved himself to be a shrewd Yankee. His marriage in 1823 to Jerusha, daughter of Jeremiah Munson, son of the wealthiest member of the Granville colony of 1805, helped to cement his position as a leading citizen.

Fassett eventually left Granville for Cleveland, and then New York City where he lived for 10 years, but in 1856, he returned to Granville. In that year he was elected president of the Central Ohio Railroad (which later became a part of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad). It was about this time that Bryn Mawr (Welsh for "big hill") was built on a hill high above the railroad tracks which ran along the southern edge of his property. On the roof was a cupola providing a look-out from which Fassett could watch his trains go by. Perhaps it was this lookout that caused the house to be dubbed "Fassett's Folly" by his contemporaries. Here he died unexpectedly in 1863.

The estate then passed to Francis Dunlevy, husband of his only surviving child, Amanda, and Bryn Mawr

became known as the Dunlevy place, a name which stuck through a succession of owners. In 1930-1931, it successively was owned briefly by John H. Hislop of Columbus, a relative of Lady Tate, whose husband gave the Tate Gallery in London to the British nation, and Dana C. Sykes, former U.S. Consul to Buenos Aires and later to Italy. It has been said that Bob Hope once considered buying it for a country club.

A Proposition of Interest

A new phase began for Bryn Mawr in 1931. On the morning of June 1, Bishop James J. Hartley of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Columbus placed a telephone call



BEING TRUE TO THEIR SCHOOL—Students from Our Lady of Mercy School in the 1930's.

to St. Mary's in what is now German Village. The bishop requested that Father Edmund Burkley (later Monsignor), pastor of St. Mary's, and Sister M. De Chantal, O.S.F. of St. Mary's School, appear at his residence at 12:30 p.m., saying he had a proposition he thought would be of interest.

Dana Sykes had married a wealthy Italian girl, Mary Storero, and they lived at Bryn Mawr barely a year before Mary wanted to return to her native Italy. Sykes, to comply with his wife's wishes, offered the estate to Bishop Hartley for \$55,000. The bishop recalled that the Congregation of the Third Order of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate in Joliet, Illinois, was interested in purchasing some land in Ohio and gave the nuns first choice over Mt. Carmel Hospital which was also considering the property.

Before the day was out Sister De Chantal had gotten a letter off to her superior, Mother M. Thomasine in Joliet. Sister De Chantal was obviously exuberant at the prospect of her Order acquiring the estate. She described it to Mother Thomasine as "375 acres of tillable land, (Father Burkley says it is very good land), wonderful shrubery [sic], trees, flowers, take up about 20 acres of this property. On the property is a large, colonial residence, 20 spacious rooms [later described as having 32 rooms] with electricity, gas and water. ...On the property are three tenant houses for the help, barns, green house equipped with furnace." She went on to say " ...the bishop is very anxious for you to come to Columbus to look at this property. The deal must be closed by June 9."

The Mission is Established

The sisters lost no time in accepting the bishop's offer, and the purchase was made on June 6, 1931. On the Feast of the Assumption, August 15, 1931, the Granville Mission, as it was then called, was formally established. Bishop Hartley dedicated the chapel there to Our Lady of Mercy on September 26, 1931, but the house was not yet ready for students.

At a meeting of the Council of the Congregation in Joliet on April 16, 1932, the "Granville Problem" was taken under consideration. The "problem" was how to best utilize their new acquisition: What kind of school would be most advisable? A resident and day school for backward girls or a kindergarten for boys and girls were the two suggestions made for further consideration. A month later, on May 18, a lengthy discussion resulted in the decision to adopt both the suggestions as to the kind of school made at the previous meeting, and to name the school "Our Lady of Mercy."

The Great Depression was not a propitious time for such a venture, and before the school opened on September 12, 1932, with Sister Blanche Allonas as superior and principal, it had become a private boarding and day school for normal boys and girls, but only girls were accepted as resident students. Individual instruction, including French from grade one, was offered to nine students from Newark (one of them was resident) who occupied two classrooms. On November 20, the second boarder arrived, a lone seventh-grader from Cleveland who had Newark connections. In the first years at least six children of Denison professors were among the student body.

High Style—and Rutted Roads

On October 16, 1933, I arrived at Our Lady of Mercy as a resident first-grader. My grandmother, Sylvania Cooley Schaus, who lived on the Lancaster road during the Civil War, often recalled the high style in which the Dunlevy family lived, and their fine horses and carriages traveling over the rutted road to Granville. In the '30s, the unpaved road was still rutted and impassable in the heavy snows of winter, making for times when none of the day pupils could get there.

Classes began at 9 a.m. and ended at 3 p.m. with a 15-minute recess in the morning and an hour for lunch and recreation. During these free times in the winter there was sledding down what seemed like a steep slope and through a grape arbor, and in better weather swinging and running under the huge, ancient trees while avoiding the black snakes which occasionally slithered across the lawn, and gathering chestnuts, or playing games on the balustraded veranda which ran across the front and the south side of the house.

On rainy days the games were played in the third-floor ballroom. After school hours there were ponies to ride, walks through the woods, and farm chores to watch, such as the butchering of a hog. After dinner resident girls were taught embroidery. Bedtime was early and many times at night we would smell skunks and know they had gotten into the chicken coop again.

In 1938 a summer camp for normal girls was established. Again I was at Our Lady of Mercy, for two weeks of camp in July 1940. Those days were passed pleasantly with tennis, horseback riding, nature walks in the woods, leather-craft, resting on the lawn, and swimming at Spring Valley, to which we were transported in the back of a pick-up truck.

A Year-Long Schedule

With the coming of World War II and a return to prosperity as well as a request from Bishop Hartley, the sisters looked back to their original purpose. In their brochure of 1931, they had proclaimed that they intended "to give individual assistance to girls who are retarded in their studies, or who, because of delicate **health or some** such reason, cannot apply themselves to a full school schedule." It was decided the school would operate through the 12 months of the year. This schedule was followed even when the school was for normal children. In the summer months then private tutoring in a variety of subjects and in music was given to students from other schools.

The bishop wanted instruction for retarded girls and the parents of past and present normal students wanted the school to continue as it had from its beginning. A compromise was reached on August 31, 1941, when the Congregation decided to accommodate the normal pupils with a day school for them in the mansion house, and to organize a "Special School for Special Girls" as a separate and segregated unit at St. Agnes Cottage, one of the tenant houses just below the main building. High school classes had closed permanently June 8, 1939, and the following January the highest enrollment of the regular school had been reached with 20 girls and nine boys. September 8, 1941, the day school in the main building opened with 19 students; five special girls, with a sixth arriving two weeks later, were lodged in St. Agnes Cottage. On June 11, 1943, 16 girls and seven boys found themselves without a school. The date marked the final closing of the school for normal students. Henceforth, the work of the sisters would be devoted to retarded girls.

Many Miracles of Learning

By 1954, there were 35 students, three of whom were day pupils from Granville and Newark. Twenty of these were Catholic, 14 were Protestant, and one girl was Jewish. The school had always been non-sectarian. The usual grade school subjects were taught, and a great

emphasis was placed on crafts. Sewing, weaving, carpet-making on looms, knitting, crocheting, and tatting were included in the curriculum. Those who showed any ability in music were given an opportunity to learn to play the piano. Many miracles of learning were accomplished by Sister Roseanne Berna, principal, and the eight nuns on her staff.

The school was becoming better known and many applicants had to be turned away for lack of space, so a drive was launched in 1955 to raise \$300,000 for an expansion on a knoll south of the mansion. Since fees were now based on ability to pay, the school was losing money in spite of the aid of groups of women in Columbus organized as Beads of Our Lady of Mercy (like the Twigs of Children's Hospital), and in spite of the careful management of the farm, which produced nearly all the food, by Sister Roseanne who grew up on a farm.

A Very Sad Day

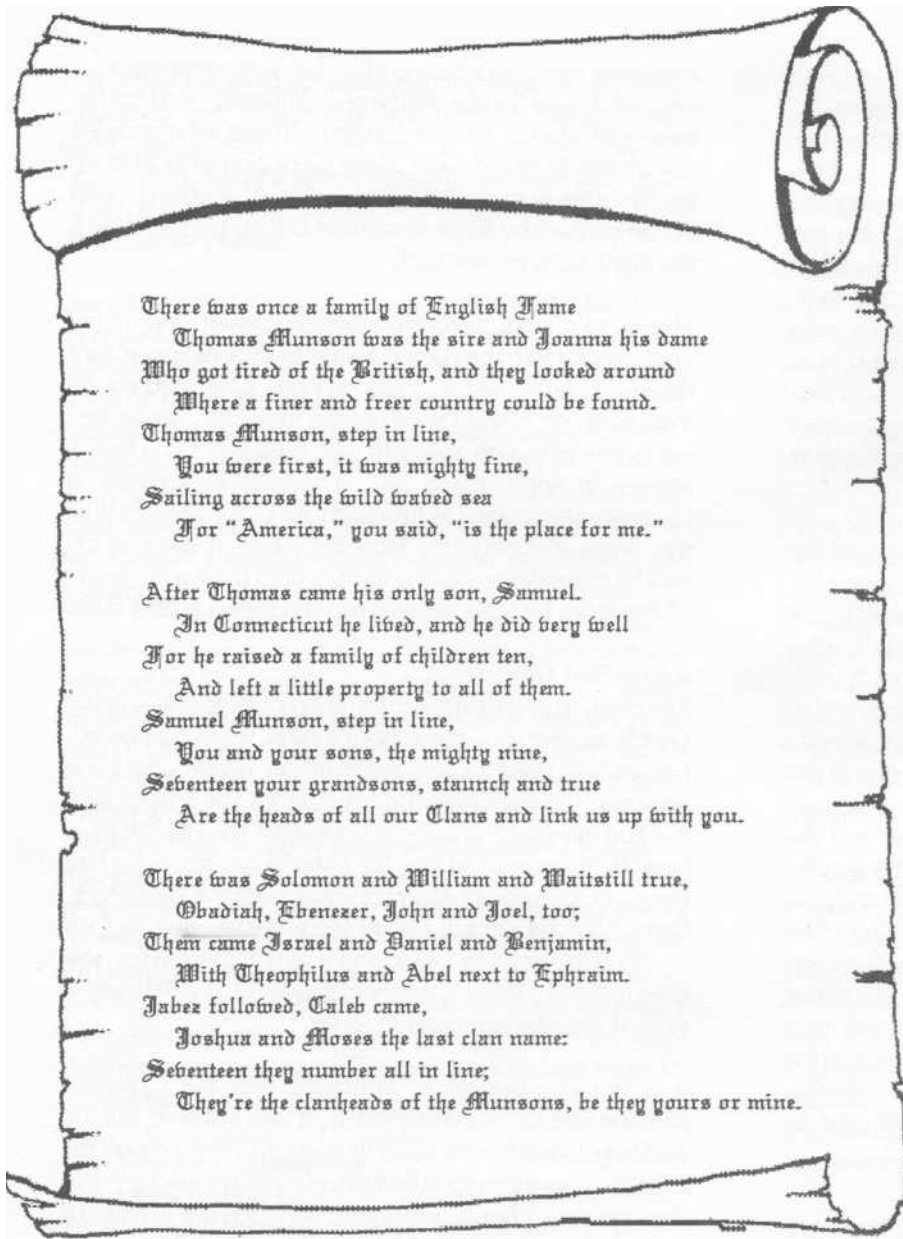
The fund-raising campaign fell short of its goal and being unable to expand, the school's days were numbered. Just as the Feast of the Assumption had marked the beginning of the Granville Mission for the sisters, so it marked its end 27 years later on August 15, 1958. It must have been a very sad day for Sister Roseanne who had been at Our Lady of Mercy almost from the beginning. Sister Blanche did not live to see this day. She had left in 1937, returned in 1944, and was still there when she died in 1949. Sister Roseanne, however, is still living—now at the Motherhouse in Joliet.

It is not appropriate to conclude that the Granville Mission was failure. Financially, it was a failure, but the making of a profit was never its purpose. The nuns on the mission gave many girls better and more productive lives through their charity, kindness, patience but insistence on obedience, and teaching, both moral and practical, rooted in the love of God. In its real purpose, the Granville Mission was an enormous success.

Ann Natalie Hansen
Granville Historical Society Member

*The nuns on the mission
gave many girls better and
more productive lives.*





'They're the clanheads of the Munsons'

SIR THOMAS MUNSON emigrated from his English homeland to the New World in 1640 to seek out religious freedom. The family grew in both number and wealth. Thomas' only son, Samuel, bore 17 children, most of whom remained in Connecticut. One son, Ephraim, settled in East Granville, Mass. One of his children was named Jesse, who lived most of his life in Granville, Mass., where he made his fortune by speculating in land and farming, as well as inheriting a substantial sum from his father. Of Jesse's nine children, two names are familiar to historians in Granville, Ohio. Jeremiah, born May 27, 1780, and Augustine, born September 30, 1783, grew up and eventually were among the first to settle in a new and exciting land, Granville, Ohio.

Almost two hundred years later, the people of Welsh Hills School, a small independent school only 13 years old, have re-entered the life of one of these brothers, Augustine Munson. Somewhere near the year 1810, Augustine Munson built a house on Centerville Street, now called Newark-Granville Road, and today that house has been given a new lease on life.

Within the next two years, the Augustine Munson House will be moved, restored and integrated into the new Welsh Hills Schoolhouse. The 4,000 square-foot house will join almost 12,000 square feet of new construction in a New England continuous architectural design that is both unique and consistent with the home-like setting that is an integral part of the character of Welsh Hills

School. The historic 1825 Bancroft House on Elm Street in the heart of Granville village has housed the school since 1981 and has given more than 350 children a special start to their educational career.

Welsh Hills students learn about their environment and the history of Granville as well as their curricular subjects. They graduate from the school at the eighth grade with a sensitivity and appreciation that children in sterile, institutional school buildings will never have. That important feature of a Welsh Hills education encouraged the parents, faculty and administration of this school to secure the Augustine Munson House for future students and to save the old house from certain destruction as its owners prepared to develop the land on which it sat.

The people of Welsh Hills School share a likeness with Augustine Munson. Augustine was an entrepreneur, an industrious man of many ideas and much determination. He was a builder, land speculator, sawyer, carder, candle maker, forger, iron and steel maker, road builder, brick maker, and canal contractor. He spent his life working within the community to establish trade with surrounding towns, such as Zanesville, Chillicothe, Newark and Columbus. Problems of transportation continued to plague Granville and many of Munson's projects were aimed at overcoming this limitation.

The Munson spirit rarely dimmed, however, and both Augustine and his brother, Jeremiah, charged ahead with innovative projects such as the Granville Furnace, a foundry at the base of Mt. Parnassus, which produced iron goods, especially stoves. In 1822, Augustine was elected as representative of Licking County to the state legislature, where he helped guide the state to a great transformation. The state government had decided to build a canal through Ohio and extend the National Road out of Zanesville. Both undertakings greatly excited Granville citizens, for it was thought that the

National Road would pass through Granville, giving easy access to trade. It was also thought that a feeder line to the Ohio Canal, only seven miles away, would successfully link Granville to distant markets. Neither was to happen in the end, but the excitement of these prospects to improve transportation to Granville invigorated the citizens and the Munsons.

That the Munsons were highly motivated individuals was obvious. They demonstrated a willingness to move from the East when their economic situation seemed hapless; they took charge of organizing vital industries—a grist, saw and flour mills—when they saw the community needed them; they innovated with the furnace; and they also were leaders in the community. Entrepreneurship was no doubt a widespread phenomenon in these pioneering times and the Munsons, along with a number of other Granville founders, were among those who helped secure the success of Granville as an enterprising village, even with the disappointment of failed transportation channels.

It is with that same sense of vision and determination that this small school, only 78 students at maximum enrollment, has moved forward against great obstacles: low profile in the community for most of its existence, young alumni, no endowment, small constituency. We are discovering more and more that people who believe in the value of a good education appreciate what this small school is trying to do. As they and others step forward to help with our Schoolhouse Project, that same entrepreneurial spirit so evident in the lives of Augustine and Jeremiah Munson reappears. When the school moves into the Munson House, the same spirit of celebration that Augustine Munson must have felt on many occasions in his life will return in the people of Welsh Hills School. They will celebrate Augustine Munson and the future of Welsh Hills School.

Evelyn Hoyt Frolicking
Director, Welsh Hills School



The Munson House in its original form, as shown in the 1875 Licking County Atlas.

Fall Schedule, Civil War Roundtable

Meetings on the Third Tuesday of the Month. Meetings normally take place in the D-Room of the Denison Physical Education Building at 7 p.m. The November meeting is in the Old Academy Building.

Sept. 15: Neal Meier [OSU], "Sherman's Georgia Campaign"

Oct. 20: Don Bonar [Denison], "West Virginia's Contribution to the Civil War"

Nov. 17: Loyd Easton [O. Wesleyan], "Rutherford B. Hayes: Civil War and After"; 7:30 p.m. This will be a joint meeting of the Society and the Roundtable, set for the Old Academy Building, Elm and Main Streets.

Dec. 15: Clarke Wilhelm [Denison], "The Civil War in the West: New Mexico"

Report from the Program Committee

The Program Committee is delighted to announce the following events for the fall and winter seasons:

Sept. 28: Pat Mooney [Catholic Record Society]: video presentation on a unique style of barn architecture, patterned after barns built by German immigrants in certain parts of Pennsylvania; 7:30 p.m., D-Room, Denison Physical Education Center.

Nov. 10: Annual Banquet Program: Richard Hood [Denison] will present a program on the history of the banjo, including a performance. Details to be announced. The Society's "Historian of the Year" Award will be presented at this banquet.

Nov. 17: Prof. Loyd Easton [O. Wesleyan], "Rutherford B. Hayes: Civil War and After," a joint meeting with the Civil War Roundtable, 7.30 p.m., Academy Building.

Jan. 26: Tony Stoneburner: "James Gilruth: Methodist Circuit Rider"; 7:30 p.m., Old Academy Building.

Society members and guests are invited to participate in all programs. If you have a topic for the Program Committee to consider, contact Mary Ann Malcuit, Program Committee Chair, in care of the Society.

Docent Program Blossoms

Dorothy Garrett, Chair of the Museum Committee, notes that some 240 visitors came through the museum on June 26, the day of the "Greater Ohio Bicycle Adventure." Our thanks to Eleanor Oatman and Gay Weinberg for serving that day. Dorothy notes that the Society broke attendance records the entire weekend.

The other enthusiastic docents are Martha and Walter [Buck] Burkley, John Howard, John Kessler, Elaine Mounsey, John Narin, Ed and Rosemary Portofe, Peck Shannon, Robert Watson, Margaret and Warner Wolverton, Buck Sargent and Dick Shiels.

Dorothy is still seeking additional Society members to serve as docents. If you would like to become a docent, call her at 587-1 182 or write her in care of the Society.

Photography Exhibition Wows 'Em!

Nearly 300 people visited the photo exhibit in the Old Academy Building during the Fourth of July Weekend. Board member Dan Campbell did a wonderful job assembling and arranging this marvelous exhibition. This is the second year for such an exhibition and we hope that we can do similar events each July.

Bennett Publishes Civil War Article

Society Secretary Kevin Bennett published an article on the Jacksonville Mutiny in the Spring issue of *Civil War History*. Kevin presented an early version of his article at a meeting of the Society's Civil War Roundtable. Congratulations to Kevin on the publication of his work in an important journal in civil war studies.



Update: Old Colony Restoration

Work continues in the Old Colony Burying Ground. Jim and Minxie Fannin of the Fannin Lehner Preservation Associates came back for 10 days of work on difficult repairs.

Rob Firchau and Brian Workman were the successful applicants for internships supported by the Society; they assisted by lifting, digging and hauling, and made a big difference in the repair work.

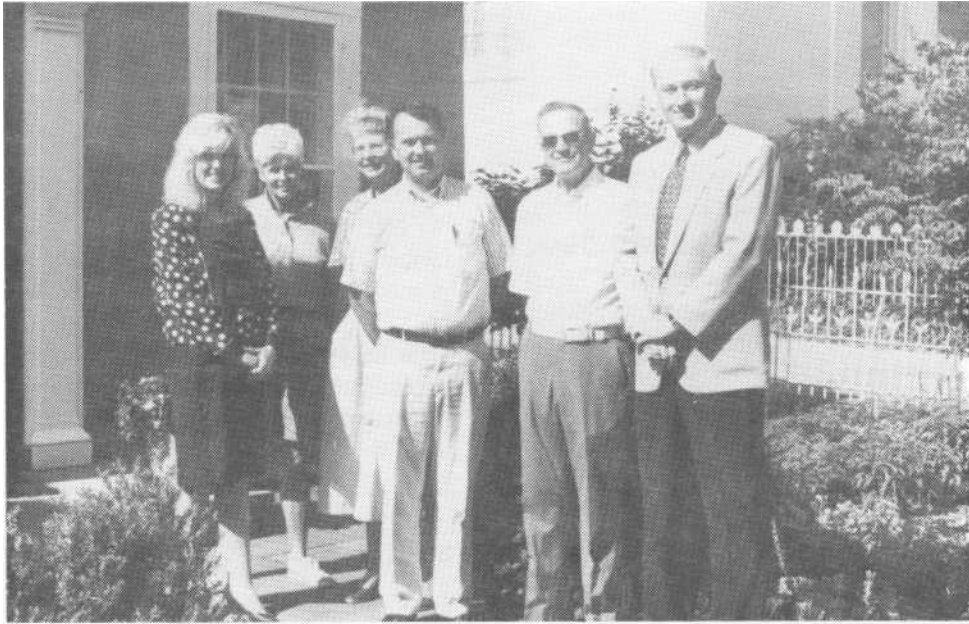
On July 25th volunteers turned out for a work day and 20 gravestones in the front section of the north side were re-set, leveled, or re-placed in their bases. The Kiwanis Club bought an excellent set of tools for the volunteers to use, and we are grateful for their generosity. The Society provides meals for the Fannins while they are in Granville and lunches for the volunteers on work days.

The flowers planted along the front wall of the Old Colony are in full bloom. Walk through and see what has been accomplished so far. If you would like to help, call the Society and leave a message.

1992 Membership Roll

The individuals listed below are members in good standing of the Granville Historical Society for 1992. Are you listed correctly? Please let us know. Bob Seith is the new membership chair and can be reached in care of the Society.

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	Mrs. Anne L. Grimes				



PROUD AS POSIES—Gathered in front of the Granville Historical Society Museum to dedicate the new Heppenstall Park: Sharon Schreiber of the Licking County Foundation; Louella Reese; Kirsten Pape; Richard Shiels; Harold "Buck" Sargent; Frank Murphy, chair of the Foundation. (Photo courtesy of Sally MacPhail, The Granville Sentinel)

Museum Garden Dedicated, Named for M. H. Heppenstall

On July 6, Society President Dick Shiels and Board Member and Chair of the Properties Committee, Buck Sargent, presided over the formal dedication of the new Marguerite Halpine Heppenstall gardens in front of the museum. Attending the dedication were members of the Licking County Foundation, Frank Murphy [Chair] and Sharon Schreiber, Kirsten Pape and Louella Reese.

As Mary Roberts noted in her weekly **Sentinel** column, the gardens beautify immensely the south side of Broadway. Our thanks to the Foundation, to Louella Reese, and to Buck Sargent, all of whom made this possible.

The grounds of the Old Academy Building have also been the object of an extensive landscaping and renewal project. Through the generosity of anonymous benefactors, the OAB landscape renovation was made possible. Buck Sargent again coordinated the activities. Our thanks and gratitude to our benefactors.

Kirsten Pape designed and laid out the beautiful gardens in both areas. Her landscaping expertise has greatly enhanced the major properties owned and maintained by your Society. John Klauder assisted in this work.

THE HISTORICAL TIMES is a quarterly publication included with membership in the Granville Historical Society and is sent to all members.

EDITORIAL BOARD: Maggie Brownfield, Florence Hoffman, Anthony Lisska, Robert Seith.

Send questions, comments and suggestions to:

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