

# THE HISTORICAL TIMES

NEWSLETTER OF THE GRANVILLE, OHIO, HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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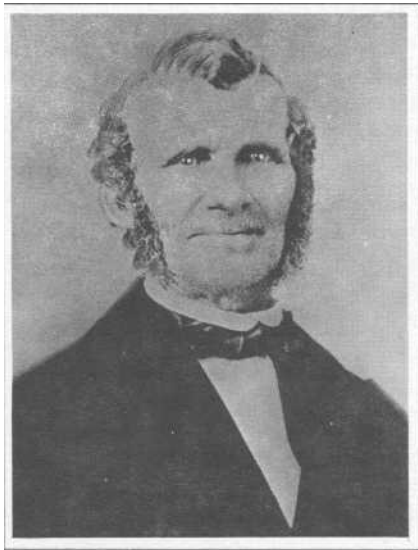
## 'It's God's Truth, William'

*"WE HAD AN APPLE TREE near the old home but it never gave us any fruit. So we were told that if we dug it up and planted it with the top in the ground and the roots in the air it would bear the next year. We did dig it up and planted it as we were told to do, and the very next year we harvested from that tree 14 barrels of fine apples and picked up enough drops to make three barrels of good cider. Ain't that so, Adaline?"*

*"It's a God's fact, William. Nobody'd ever doubt your word."*

THE HISTORY OF THE WELSH HILLS is made up of stories. The Welsh who settled on the Hills were farmers, not the sort of people who left extensive written records of their lives. Their environment was primarily an oral one, dominated by storytellers who preserved the history of the settlement and provided entertainment on long winter nights. One particular resident of the Hills, a farmer named Wil-

liam Cramer, was the acknowledged virtuoso of the tall tale. His storytelling ability and wit impressed every-



*William Cramer*

one who heard him. Dead for more than a century, he is remembered warmly even today.

William Cramer came to Granville when he was less than a year old. Cramer family tradition states that he arrived with the Theophilus Rees party which reached the Welsh Hills in 1802. His mother, Rebecca, was the daughter of Jimmy Johnson, an Indian fighter who was Theophilus' bodyguard and assistant. William's father was Thomas Cramer. Rebecca claimed that she carried young William, who was less than a year old at the time, across the Ohio River. She left him swaddled on the bank while she recrossed the treacherous river to help her husband bring their wagon across. Other sources, such as his obituary and gravestone, place William

Cramer's date of birth in 1804. In any case, Mr. Cramer lived on the Welsh Hills from the very beginning of the Welsh settlement there.

**William** Cramer was a prosperous and successful farmer. He left a large and well-kept farm to his heirs. His neighbors turned to him when they had difficulties

with their cows, since William had a repertoire of herbal cures, then called "witchcraft." He was married



*Adaline Cramer*

to Adaline Knight Cramer, a rugged and independent woman. She appears in most accounts of William's stories, backing up his preposterous yarns with a supportive, "It's God's truth, William." Though his education was not extensive, his ability to weave fascinating stories is beyond question. The appendices of Harvey Jones' "History of a Pioneer Community" contain a whole collection of his stories, including an attempt by Jones to quote one verbatim. Cramer's way with words impressed everyone who heard him.

The stories that survive are spectacular, tall tales that William told solely for entertainment. Written accounts come down to us through the Jones brothers, Harvey and Benjamin, historians of the Welsh Hills during the twenties and thirties. Ben wrote a series of columns entitled "Our County History" for *The Newark Advocate*. Harvey compiled the only substantial volume on the history of the Welsh Hills, "The Welsh Hills: History of a Pioneer Community." William Cramer is often mentioned in the brothers' writings. Ben recounted many a Cramer tale in his column. Harvey devotes several pages to him in his appendix dealing with the folklore of the Hills.

William Cramer had a story for every occasion. He once swam the Ohio River 200 times in a single night, ferrying hogstothe West Virginia bank.

His sons had discovered a hollow tree packed with raccoons, opossums, and a turkey buzzard. The animals were packed together so tightly that they were forced to breathe in unison, making the tree open and close like a huge bellows. William also claimed to have sighted a demonic headless horseman who chased himtothe Cambria Mill. He also told of skinning a fox without killing it:

*One day I was out hunting and after shooting much game I found a beautiful fox which I much wanted. I searched for a bullet for my rifle, but found none. So, while I had plenty of powder and caps, I could not get the fox. To my pleasant surprise, I found in one of my pockets a ten-penny nail which I used instead of a bullet. After I fired, I saw that the fox was nailed to the fence by his tail. I ran to kill him with my knife, but discovered that I had dropped it. I cut a switch from a beech tree and switched the fox with it until he jumped out of his hide and ran away, leaving me his hide. Ain't that so, Adaline?"*

*"That's a fact, William. Nobody'd doubt your word."*

William Cramer's stories were part of the glue that bound the Welsh Hills together and kept it distinct from the town of Granville. The oral culture of the hills, along with the Welsh schools, churches, and language, helped keep the two communities separate until the early years of the century. As those factors began to disappear with the advent of better roads and greater centralization, the Welsh Hills lost much of their identity and began to be incorporated into the greater Granville community. The process is almost entirely complete today.

The Welsh Hills community that William Cramer knew has almost disappeared. The original family plots are being subdivided and sold to housing developers. The separate Welsh Hills schools have long since been integrated into the Granville school system. The Welsh language is no longer spoken. The Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Church has been abandoned for years. But even now, there are still people who remember the old Welsh Hills and rhythms of life that once existed in the hill country north of Granville. William Cramer was an important part of the fabric of the old Welsh Hills and he

deserves to be remembered.

#### **Bibliographical**

Note: This article was written with extensive assistance from Ruth Sipe of

Hankinson Road. She is an expert on the history of the Welsh Hills settlement and a descendent of William Cramer and five other original settlers on the Hills. Her notebooks, photographs, and memory provided most of the information used in the article. The two William Cramer stories which are quoted at length are from an article by Ben Jones entitled "Cramer Tales Fiction Masterpieces," published in *The Newark Advocate* of February 16, 1938. William Cramer's birth and death dates are available on his tombstone in the Phillips Cemetery and in the *Old Northwest Genealogical Quarterly*. Articles written by Ben Jones for *The Newark Advocate* provided background. Harvey Jones' "The Welsh Hills: History of a Pioneer Community" was also helpful as a general reference work.

Eric Evans  
Harvard University  
(Granville High School, 1989)

*William Cramer's stories were part of the glue that bound the Welsh Hills together and kept it distinct from the town of Granville.*

# Granville Then and Now

by Daniel Campbell

LAST YEAR, Daniel Campbell organized a display of historic photographs, shown in the Society's Old Academy Building during the Independence Day celebrations. He is at work now on a new exhibit, "Granville: Then and Now," scheduled to open for the 1992 observances. In the following article, Mr. Campbell, recently elected to the Board of Management of the Society, shares his insights into some of the resources he has uncovered in preparing the exhibit.

AMONG THE MANY ARTIFACTS in the Granville Historical Society archives are 846 three-by-four inch glass negatives—"wet plates" made with collodion. These negatives were made between about 1860 and 1880. They are individual and small-group portraits, and no written records exist to identify the subjects. Only their likenesses remain.

As almost everyone knows, photography is the recording of a camera image upon substances sensitive to the action of light. The first photographic techniques evolved during the years 1800-1839, when the two aspects of the practice came together: the philosophical foundation of geometrical linear perspective that was thought out during the Renaissance and the corresponding development of the *camera obscura*; and the phenomenon,

observed in the early 1700s, that certain salts of silver, especially the halides, were sensitive to light.

It wasn't until shortly before 1800 that Thomas Wedgwood attempted to record the camera image. He began by coating paper with silver nitrate, placing flat objects in

contact with the paper, and exposing it all to light. Unfortunately, he did not find a way to fix permanently these "sunprints," and they faded away. In the year 1827, Joseph Nicéphore Niepce succeeded in recording a direct positive image on a plate coated with bitumen. It was

finally two men, however—Louis Jacques Mande Daguerre in France and William Henry Fox Talbot in England—who simultaneously announced the realization of complete photographic processes in 1839.

Daguerre and Talbot, and the procedures they discovered, dominated photography for a dozen years. Both men maintained strict control over their respective discoveries and charged fees for the use of their inventions, thus discouraging widespread use. Then in 1851 a new method of producing photographs was invented by an English sculptor, Frederick Scott Archer. Since this method was not patented, it became the preferred way of making photographs and by 1861 had completely replaced both the Daguerreotype (Daguerre's process) and the Calotype (Talbot's process).

Archer's discovery, the collodion or "wet plate" process, basically involved sensitizing glass plates with silver salts, using collodion as a matrix. The photographer first coated a glass plate with collodion that contained potassium iodide. (Collodion is a solution of nitrocellulose in alcohol and ether. It dries rapidly and forms a tough, waterproof film.) The plate was then submerged in a solution of silver nitrate. The silver ions combined with the iodine ions and formed light-sensitive silver iodide within the collodion. The plate, still wet, was placed in the camera and exposed. After exposure, the plate was developed in pyrogallol acid,



*Clearly a femme fatale of an earlier day!*



*Who are these serious gentlemen from Granville's past?*

fixed in a solution of hypo, washed, and dried. A positive print was made by contact, usually on albumen paper.'

The photographer could not stray far from a dark-room because once the collodion dried, it became impermeable and impossible to develop. As the exposure times were rather long, the subject had to remain stationary, resulting in strangely static and somber expressions.

This cumbersome process conspired to make the portrait session a ceremonial event. Individuals would perhaps have only one photograph of themselves made, or a few over a period of years. The episode was confined within the photographer's studio; a ritual isolated from the mainstream of everyday life. An authentic awe surrounded the magical appearance of a likeness from a seemingly blank surface—liquid metal absorbing the latent image, transforming energy into substance, invisible until its release through alchemy.

When these hardy souls consented to have their portraits made, they probably did not think future generations would look with such interest at their likenesses. Yet they were most certainly aware that their photographs would be tied directly to them in a way no other means of representation could equal.

Photographs are literal tracings of the emanations of a subject in a past reality. They are the authentication that what I see has existed. For those into whose care the photograph was entrusted, this direct link to physical past reality imbued the image with a special emotional power. As Roland Barthes says, "from a real body, which was there, proceed radiations which ultimately touch me, who am here; the duration of the transmission is insignificant; the photograph of the missing being...will touch me like the delayed rays of a star. A sort of umbilical cord links the body of the photographed thing

to my gaze...."<sup>2</sup>

Behold the silver salts that anchor the tracings of light and witness at once the past and the real, a resurrection of the kind that collapses time into the mystery of concomitance; as direct knowledge of life is intuited beyond words.

Photographic images bombard us everywhere. The kinetic postmodern societies of our age consume images as the societies of the past consumed beliefs. This plethora of visual representation has diffused our attention and quenched our desire; our responses petrifying into an affected stance of queasy boredom.

It is difficult to imagine a world without photographs, or a world in which a photograph is a rare and

*Photographic images bombard us everywhere. The kinetic postmodern societies of our age consume images as the societies of the past consumed beliefs.... It is difficult to imagine a world without photographs, or a world in which a photograph is a rare and mysterious thing. At the time these negatives were exposed, photography was not the cultural activity it is today.*

mysterious thing. At the time these negatives were exposed, photography was not the cultural activity it is today. To appreciate what these images tell us, we must open ourselves to the tortuous desire that inoculates our hearts with the fervent wish for consummation; the spasm

that silences our minds for flight on the broad wings of perception.

"Perhaps we have an invincible resistance to believing in the past, in History, except in the form of myth. The Photograph, for the first time, puts an end to this resistance; henceforth the past is as certain as the present, what we see on paper is as certain as what we touch. It is the advent of the Photograph...which divides the history of the world."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Newhall, Beaumont (1982), *The History of Photography*, (New York: Little, Brown and Company).

<sup>2</sup> Barthes, Roland (1981), *Camera Lucida* (New York: Hill and Wang/Farrar, Straus and Giroux), p. 80.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 87-88.

## GRANVILLE COVERLETS GIVEN TO SOCIETY

Through the generous donation of Michelle Wherry and Sue Scarpitti, two Granville coverlets depicting local buildings have been given to the Society. They are on display in the museum. The Board gratefully acknowledges this thoughtful gift to the collection of the museum.

## CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

The Civil War Roundtable will conclude its winter and spring meetings on Tuesday, June 16. Keith Hoover will lead a discussion on the topic of "General Lee Considered." The meeting will take place in the D-Room in the Denison University Field House at 7:00.

The April meeting featured Professor Perry Lentz from Kenyon College speaking on Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage*. The May meeting centered on Confederate General Johnston, with the discussion led by Society Secretary Kevin Bennett.

Tentative programs for the fall include a discussion of the Civil War in West Virginia and a lecture on Rutherford B. Hayes. The Fall series of the Roundtable will begin on the third Tuesday of September. All Society members are welcome to participate in these discussions.

The Board of Management gratefully acknowledges Keith Piper's efforts in arranging our meeting place in the D-Room.

## 'DIOLCH YN FAWR' ( ' WITH GREAT THANKS' )... FANCHION LEWIS

At the April meeting of the Society, the Board of Management passed a resolution thanking Fanchion Lewis, on the occasion of her retiring from the Museum Committee, for her many years of service to the Society. The resolution reads, in part,

"Therefore be it resolved that the Society make broadly known its deep and enduring affection for Fanchion Lewis, expressing its thanks for such exemplary and unstinting service."

## BOARD MEMBERS COMPLETE TERMS OF OFFICE.

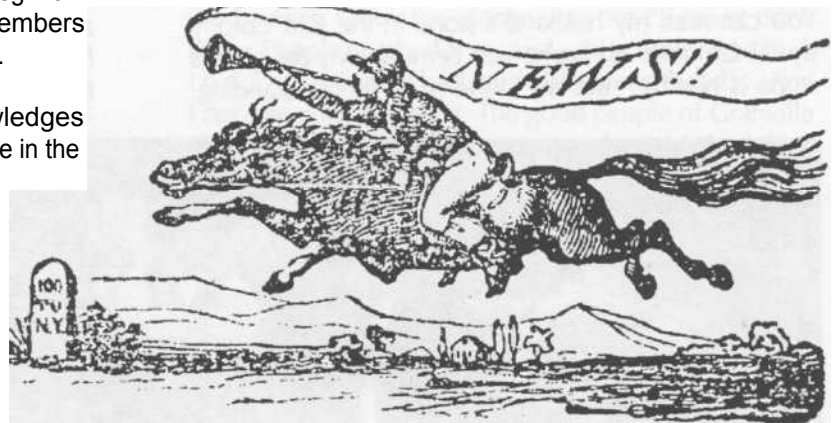
The Board of Management gratefully acknowledges the work undertaken by three members who have completed terms of service on the Board: Iry Chotlos, Dan Freytag and Ann Stout.

President Tony Stoneburner completed his term of office. The Board acknowledges his fine leadership activities this past year.

## NEW MEMBERS ELECTED TO BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

At the annual meeting in April, Richard Shiels was elected President of our Society. Also, the following new members were elected to three year terms: Dorothy Garrett, Phyllis Greene and Dan Campbell. Bob Seith was elected to complete the term of Richard Shiels.

Tom Gallant, Kevin Bennett and David Neel graciously accepted re-election as Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer, respectively.



## NOTE OF THANKS

The Editorial Board acknowledges the service of Sam Schaff who assisted in the editing and production of *The Historical Times* for the past three years.

# Voices from Granville's Past....

ON APRIL 24, SCORES OF ONLOOKERS gathered at the Society's Old Academy Building to attend a program designed to build enthusiasm for the Old Colony Burying Ground restoration project. After viewing an informational audio-visual presentation, "A Place of Peace—In Pieces," guests toured the candlelit cemetery, where five (current) local citizens "impersonated" Granvillians of years past who are interred there.

In period costume, the presenters (**Deborah Bennett, Kevin Bennett, Richard Shiels, Marilyn Sundin, and Larry Stevens**) told of the lives of these stalwarts.

Two of these sketches follow and give a sense of the evening's program.

## **ACHSA HALE ROSE (1764-1850)**

I'm Achsa Rose, Achsa Hale Rose—you probably know about my cousin Nathan Hale. You can call me Axy; I've been Aunt Axy to all the children in this town since before any of you were born.

You can read my husband's stone in the Old Colony Burial Ground; his name was Lemuel. My daughter's stone is nearby. But my stone is no longer standing.

There's a lot in the history books about my husband, and the other men, but very little about women like me. William Utter's book does call me "A woman of vivid personality and peppery tongue, who was less than enthusiastic about the idea of moving to Ohio." (p 28)

The history books tell two stories about me. The first is about my first week in Granville. My husband Lemuel and I were with the first group that came from New England to this town. We got here late in the afternoon, built a fire, and slept on the ground that first night. It was nine nights herein Granville before we had anything like a house or a shelter. The first three nights it rained hard. We were covered with blankets and with brush, but the rain dripped down on us through the blankets and crept up on us on the ground. Justin Hillyer, one of the men, woke up my husband Lemuel by shouting "Get up or you'll float away to New Orleans." I guess hethoughtwe were in the Mississippi River.

I wasn't happy at all. I didn't want to leave Massachusetts where I had a nice warm home and come all this way to sleep on the ground in the rain. That was Lemuel's idea, and I never liked it. I got pretty worked up the third night it rained so hard when we didn't have any shelter. I screamed at my husband—I was so hysterical I called him "Daddy"—and I asked him for a butcher knife so I could cut my throat. My son Helon,



*Re-creating citizens from Granville's past: Marilyn Sundin, Dick Shiels, Kevin Bennett, Deborah Bennett & Larry Stevens.*

you know what he said? He said "Oh don't, Mother, you'll bloody your gold beads."

The second story happened much later. It was after a special celebration one year. The Masons held their annual celebration of the birthday of John the Baptist. It was a big affair. The Masons were all dressed up in their uniforms and they marched down the middle of Main Street, led by a fife and drum. They went to the Presbyterian church for a sermon. Then they all went—and their wives all went—to brother Timothy's tavern for dinner.

All the men got seated first. We ladies were just standing around and waiting. What's worse is that the men ate nearly all the food! The other women were complainin' but nobody was doing anything about it and somebody had to! I got mad. I stuck my head in the room where those men were eating, and I shook my fist at Lemuel, and I said "Lem, I see you!" Then I took all of the other ladies back to my house and we killed the old turkey-gobbler and we had a feast without those men.

That's all anyone remembers about me—but that's more than anyone remembers about the other women who first came to Granville.

### **ELIAS GILMAN 1765-1857**

My name is Elias Gilman. I came to Granville with the first party of settlers from Massachusetts in 1805. Along with Justin Hillyer, I organized the great snake hunt that first year. We chose up teams and we made a wager of sorts: the team that killed the fewest snakes bought the whiskey for everybody else. You should have seen it.

The younger men were downright foolish: they'd grab a snake by the neck and smash it against a tree before the snake could bite. Some say we killed 300 snakes that day.

Those were good times, and I was a leader. I was chosen one of the magistrates in the first election in 1807. I was one of the first Masons in this town, and I was Quartermaster in the War of 1812.

I was also one of the founders of the Alexandrian Society that built the stone building you use as a museum. We started out to be a library, and we got a charter from the state. But the wording in that charter was pretty broad—it said we could issue notes, like money. So we became a bank. Did pretty well for a while too. Toward the end, I was working as the cashier. But the whole country hit a panic in 1819—you folks would call it a depression today—and our bank folded and I lost my job.

I'm ashamed to tell you, I drank a lot after that. Preacher Jacob Little said that I was never sober for twelve years! Can you imagine that—he said that to the whole church right in one of his sermons. I might have been angry if I'd been sober!

But right about 1830 the temperance idea began to get pretty popular. Here in Granville the Presbyterians said you couldn't be a member of their church if you drank. The Methodists were pretty strict about it, and so were the Baptists. I took the pledge. I swore I'd never drink again. People laughed at me and said I couldn't do it but I did. I haven't even had hard cider since that day. And I became a leader again. The good people of Granville elected me justice of the peace and I held that office many years after I took the pledge.

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## **RESTORATION BEGINS AT OLD COLONY BURYING GROUND**

The Old Colony Burying Ground reversed its long slide toward decay on May 2nd and 3rd. Restoration on the gravestones began with a workshop for volunteers given by Jim and Minnie Fannin of the Fannin/Lehner Preservation Associates of Concord, Massachusetts.

The Fannins have restored many graveyards in the eastern United States. They are experienced and knowledgeable and we are fortunate to have their help. Our enthusiastic initial corps of volunteers learned proper

techniques for straightening, repair and cleaning, which will preserve the gravestones as long as possible.

Large stones and their bases were dug out and re-set. They even found and excavated a large gravestone which had been covered by sod for many years. The improved appearance of the first two rows is obvious to all who pass by.

Volunteers turned out again on May 16 to work again. The next work day is June 13, and groups will convene regularly to continue this effort. There are many jobs for persons of all strengths and talents. Please call and leave a message at 587- 3951 if you would like to help.



*It's a Grand Old Flag...and it's flying before the grave of Timothy Rose, a veteran of the Revolutionary War and member of the scouting party that selected the site for present-day Granville.*

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.

Questions, comments and suggestions may be sent to:

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