

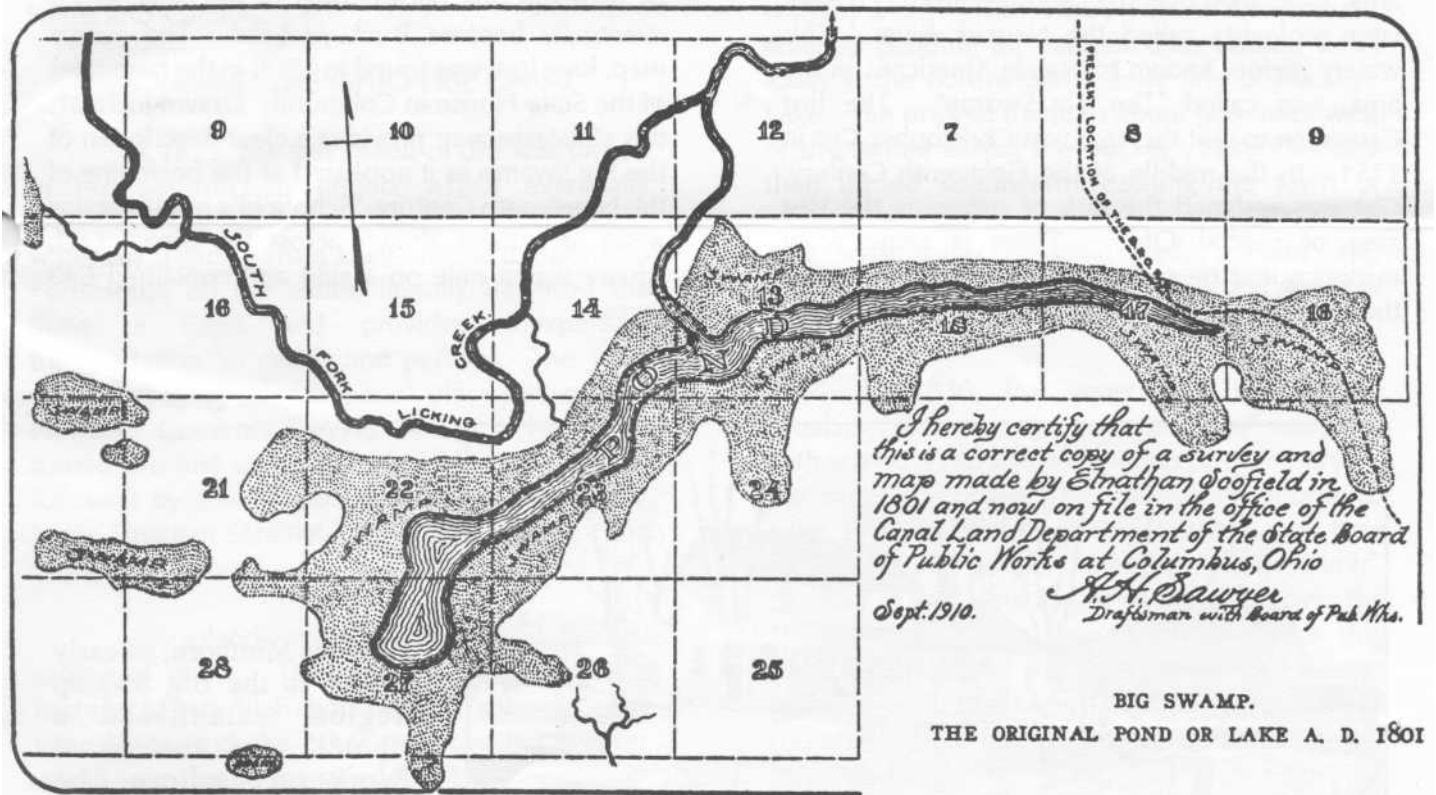
THE HISTORICAL TIMES

NEWSLETTER OF THE GRANVILLE, OHIO, HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Summer 1991

THE BIG SWAMP THE LICKING SUMMIT RESERVOIR BUCKEYE LAKE



SURVEY MAP LOCATING THE BIG SWAMP

This map is believed to be the first recorded drawing of the swamp area which eventually became Buckeye Lake. Surveyed in 1801 by Elnathan Schofield, this tract was part of the Refugee Lands awarded to former Canadians who fought with the Colonists against the British.

THE BIG SWAMP THE LICKING SUMMIT RESERVOIR BUCKEYE LAKE

Ten miles south of Granville stands a body of water connected centrally with the history of Licking County. Known today as Buckeye Lake, this inland body of water covering nearly 4000 acres is the result of glacier activity, the building and eventual demise of the Ohio-Erie Canal, and the development activities for recreation undertaken by private ownership and the State of Ohio.

THE BIG SWAMP

When the last glacier receded from what today is Licking County, it left behind a swampy area. Glaciation over the centuries produced what later geologists called the Newark River. This watery region, known to Native Americans in the area, was called "The Big Swamp". The first Caucasian to visit the area was Christopher Gist in 1751. In the middle of the Eighteenth Century, Gist was assigned the task of surveying the vast area of central Ohio. There is some scant evidence that he camped, fished and trapped in the swamp region.

Following the Revolutionary War, the United States Congress in 1801 set aside certain lands, some of which are in present day southern Licking County, for the exclusive use of those former citizens of Canada and Nova Scotia who emigrated to the colonies and fought along side the Revolutionary troops against England. This land, appropriately called the "Refugee Tract", had to be surveyed. Elnathan Schofield was the government surveyor commissioned to undertake this task. Schofield later settled in Lancaster and became a prominent member of that community.

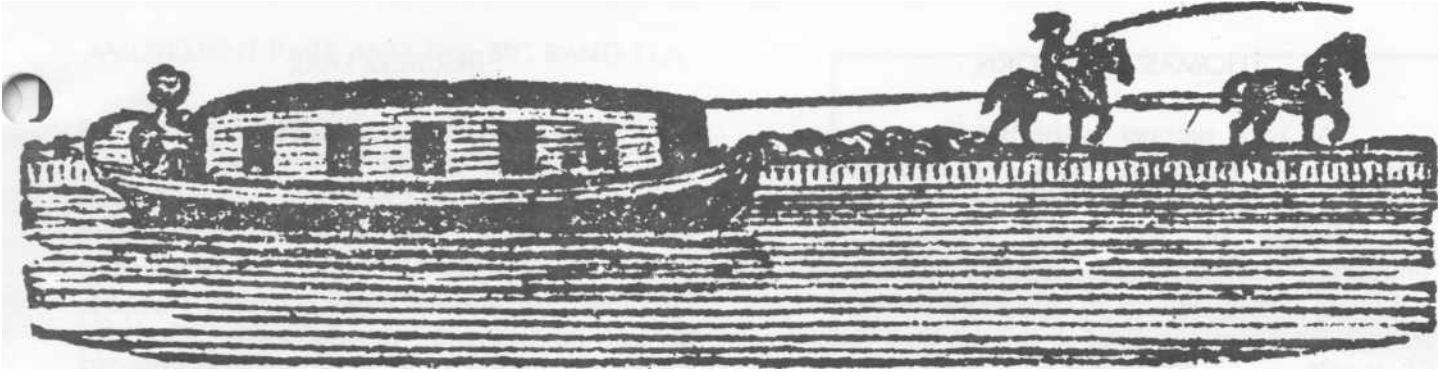
We are indebted to Schofield for providing us with the first known map of the area which eventually became Buckeye Lake. The survey map, long lost, was found in 1900 in the basement of the State House in Columbus. Drawn in 1801, this elaborate map provides a clear description of the Big Swamp as it appeared at the beginning of the Nineteenth Century. Schofield's map contains a set of squares drawn across the area. Each square was a mile on a side and contained 640 acres.



Thomas Minthorn, an early settler in the Big Swamp region, established a "hotel" for the canal workers, where he provided room and board.

This photograph depicts the Minthorn House in the 1860's.

The house was located on the west side of the canal at the entry point into the reservoir.



The last glacier left behind a unique geological and botanical site, known today as Cranberry Bog. This floating island, originally nearly fifty acres but now less than twenty, was formed during the last ice age. Plants growing on its surface are common to the northern United States and Canada.

BEGINNING THE OHIO-ERIE CANAL

In 1825, the first spade of dirt was turned in the construction project which eventually produced the Ohio-Erie Canal. This inland waterway, running from Lake Erie on the north to Portsmouth on the south, literally traversed the State of Ohio and provided inexpensive transportation for goods and persons. The 1825 groundbreaking ceremony took place just south of Newark. Governor DeWitt Clinton of New York turned the first spade-full of Licking County soil, followed by Ohio's Governor Jeremiah Morrow. Judge Elnathan Schofield was also present for this historic ceremony.

Any inland waterway needed a continuous source of water. The topography of the canal route listed two "high spots"--called "summits"--one near Akron and the other near the Big Swamp, which soon would be called "the Licking Summit". This high ground separated the water flow of the Licking River to the southeast and the Scioto River to the southwest. Not only did the Big Swamp provide sorely needed water, but it was located on the second highest level on the course of the Ohio-Erie Canal. Plans were developed to construct a huge earthen dam to both contain and elevate the water level in the Big Swamp.

FIVE "JIGGERS" OF WHISKEY A DAY

Work began in 1825 and for the next five years construction crews, mostly immigrant Irish in the later years, worked for \$8.87 a month, room and board, and from five to seven "jiggers" of Ohio whiskey a day. The construction of the reservoir entailed building an earthen dam around what today is the northwestern shore line of Buckeye Lake. The original dam ran about two miles west of the former site of the Buckeye Lake Park and then turned southward reaching the town of Millersport. The canal entered the reservoir area near what today is called "Sellar's Point" and continued in a southwesterly direction towards Millersport.

In 1830, five years after the groundbreaking ceremony, the "enlarged pond" was filled with water. With the completion of the reservoir, the canal was opened to traffic from Hebron to Lake Erie. The former Big Swamp was now officially known as the "Licking Summit Reservoir". In order to complete the canal and cross over the Licking/Scioto divide, the "Deep Cut" was dug south of Millersport. When this mammoth digging project was finished in 1833, the 303 mile canal route from Lake Erie to Portsmouth was open for travel and shipping.

Water for the reservoir came primarily from collected rain and from two creeks which entered the former swamp area on the southeastern side of the lake, Buckeye Creek and Honey Creek. Several springs on the far eastern limits of the lake area also provided supplies of water.

THOMAS MINTHORN

An early pioneer in the Big Swamp area was Thomas Minthorn, who around 1820 constructed a log cabin near the north shore. With the coming of the canal workers, the entrepreneurial Minthorn received a contract from the Canal Commission to provide room and board for the canal workers building the reservoir dam. His "hotel" was located at the site on the west bank of the canal where the canal entered the reservoir on the north shore. Minthorn's yard served as the outdoor kitchen where huge iron kettles contained the various "stews" made for consumption by the hearty canal workers. One source suggests that in these kettles were cooked meat, potatoes, dumplings, corn and other items of "a savory character". In 1840, Minthorn built a new building for his hotel. A 1939 Newark Advocate article indicated that this building was still standing at that time.

THE "NEW" RESERVOIR

Not long after the completion of the reservoir and canal, it became evident that the water storage capacity was insufficient for the canal needs. Various remedies were suggested. The first attempt was to divert water from the South Fork of the Licking River into the reservoir. In 1839, a ditch was dug, later known as the Kirkersville Feeder. This ditch entered the reservoir near the present Lieb's Island. However, the water in the reservoir was higher than in the feeder, and since, as one contemporary commentator wrote: "The water obstinately refused to run up hill!", another solution was required.

A large addition to the reservoir was planned for the west end of the body of water. Earthen banks were constructed which enclosed an additional five hundred acres of water. This expansion became known as "The New Reservoir". With the enlarged capacity for water storage, the water demands for the canal appeared to have been met. The canal and towpath went from Sellar's Point to Millersport continuing across what is now the middle of the lake. This line of travel marked the division between the original and the "new" reservoirs.

BUCKEYE LAKE

The Ohio Canal continued to operate until the early 1890's. By that time, the railroads had taken over much of the freight and passenger service demands. The canal was closed as a source of transportation. With the canal's closing, of course, the question arose concerning what to do with the reservoir. In May, 1894, The Ohio General Assembly passed an act dedicating the Licking Summit Reservoir as a public park. The reservoir was now to be known as "Buckeye Lake".

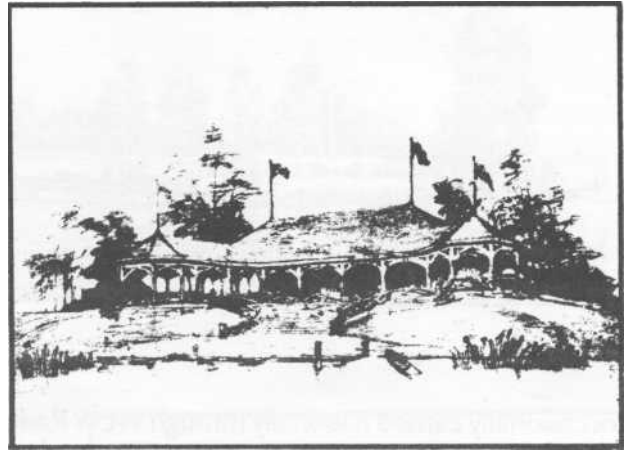
At the time of its dedication as a public park, the lake covered about 4000 acres with over thirty miles of shoreline. It was seven and a quarter miles in length and about one and a quarter miles across at its widest point.



"The Grocery Boat" -- 1910

AMUSEMENT PARK AND THE BIG BAND ERA

The amusement park opened in 1901 and continued in operation in various forms until the early 1970's. One source suggests that the park finally closed officially on June 17, 1973. In its heyday, the amusement park served its patrons with a plethora of rides, games, food-bars and the other assorted conveniences familiar to large playground areas. A roller coaster ran out over Crane Lake, fun houses provided laughter and screams, Dodge Em cars careened into each other, boats from the Del Fisher Line carried sight-seers over the waters, and the "Canals of Venice" served as a classic "tunnel of love."



Several hotels sprang up around the lake serving the patrons who came to the "Playground of Ohio" from across the eastern part of the United States. At one time, thirteen hotels graced the shoreline of the lake catering to overnight guests. Two Dance Pavilions--the Crystal Ballroom and the Pier Ballroom--brought nationally renown "big bands" to the Buckeye Lake shore. Among the big bands making melodies on the lake shore were Guy Lombardo, Eddy Duchin, Ray Anthony, Stan Kenton, Woody Herman, Glenn Miller, Benny Goodman, Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey, Louie Armstrong and Paul Whiteman. Helen O'Connell, Vaughn Monroe, and other well known vocalists often accompanied the big band visits to the two ballrooms on the lake. Radio broadcasts of the big bands playing their famous "swing" music originated from the shores of this Licking County lake,

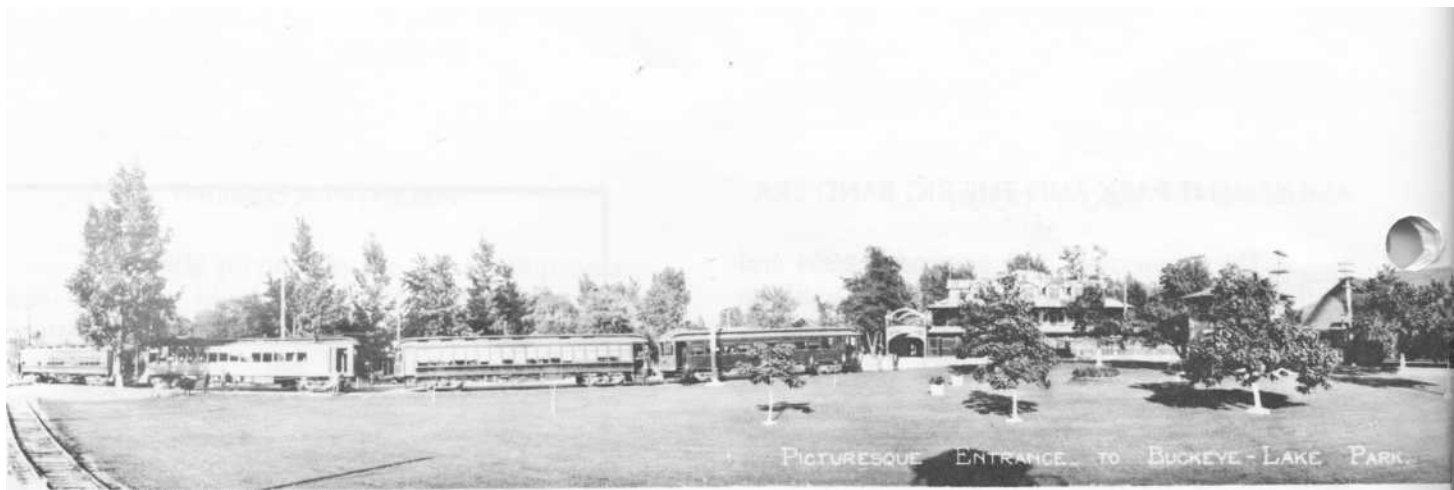


Buckeye Lake was sometimes called "The Atlantic City of Ohio".

Top: The Pavilion **about** 1900.

Middle: The Crystal Ballroom in 1936.

Bottom: Park **Entrance** in the 1950's.



occasionally carried nationally through WLW Radio in Cincinnati. Shortly after the turn of the century, the Buckeye Lake Yacht Club was foamed, principally by business persons from Columbus and Newark.

RAILROADS AND THE INTERURBAN

In the late 1800's, five railroad stations began serving the Buckeye Lake area: Avondale, Thornport, Millersport, Hebron and Lakeside. For twenty-five years, 1904-1929, the interurban line--known originally as The Columbus, Buckeye Lake and Newark Traction Company"--daily brought pleasure seeking vacationers to the lake shore. On weekends and holidays, special excursion trips on both the railroads and the interurban brought hundreds of day-trippers to the lake. The interurban line also owned and operated a hotel on the north shore of the lake.

In his book, *Ice Cream Summers*, Craven O'Donnell writes about his experiences as a kid from New York City who, in the early 1920's, spent his summers near the amusement park area on the north shore of Buckeye Lake. Summerland Beach just east of Millersport had a hotel and Chautauquan Auditorium, which was built to hold

nearly 4500 visitors. The Chautauqua movement was spreading quickly in summer vacation areas in the United States. The most notable Ohio example is Lakeside, the Methodist sponsored summer spot near the western end of Lake Erie. At the Summerland Beach site beginning in 1912, Denison University operated a summer school for several years.

Following the end of prohibition, several popular night-spots prospered at the lake, among which were the Pink Elephant, the Mayfair Room and the Hide-Away Lounge in the Lake Breeze Hotel. Harbor Hills developed as an exclusive residential community with its own polo club and country and golf club.

SEVERAL TRAGIC EVENTS

Buckeye Lake was not without its share of tragic events over the years. Fires destroyed several buildings, including the Lake Breeze Hotel. In the 1920's, two ferocious tornados struck, one in 1922 on a Sunday afternoon when the amusement park was crowded and another in 1928. These violent storms devastated large areas of lake property inflicting much personal suffering and hardship. With race relations at this time

This photograph from 1918 depicts the Mauger Hotel and what became known as the Pier Ballroom. Later known as the Lake Breeze Hotel, this building burned to the ground in the 1960's.





The Interurban cars awaiting passengers following a day at Buckeye Lake. The depot was near what later became the parking lot for the Amusement Park.

questionable at best and racist at worst, Black Americans were permitted to use the lake facilities only on designated days during the summer. On one such occasion in 1924, the Muskingum Valley Colored Elks Number 82 rented the Pier Ballroom of the Lake Breeze Hotel for a summer festivity. Dancers enjoying the music were dropped into the water below as the ballroom floor collapsed. Scores of dancers fell into the lake resulting in many injuries and seven deaths.

A tragedy of a different form occurred on July 12, 1923, when a large conclave of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan assembled at Buckeye Lake. Crosses were burned, racist bigotry proclaimed and American Blacks, Jews and Roman Catholics were slandered and verbally defamed. One estimate is that nearly one hundred thousand klansmen descended upon the lake shore for this bigoted assembly.

FROM DECLINE TO RENAISSANCE

The Buckeye Lake area started to decline in the late 1950's. Recent renovations and improvements, however, have produced rapidly increasing property values. A new EPA sponsored

Denison Summer School

Summerland Beach. Buckeye Lake.

June 17 to July 26, 1912

Announcement

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GRANVILLE. OHIO
April 1912



sewage system has eliminated the serious pollution problems which the lake faced for too many years. The pollution issue was so severe that a 1969 Licking County Regional Planning Commission Report once listed contaminated water as the biggest problem confronting the Buckeye Lake region. In 1966 and 1967, Newark Advocate articles expressed concern about the dilapidated condition of the park and surrounding areas.

The area near the former Buckeye Lake Amusement Park presently is being renovated as a state park for outdoor recreation purposes. For the first time, there will be a state-operated boat-launch facility on the north shore. Condominium projects have been completed on the north shore and major improvements have been undertaken in many of the cottages and business establishments surrounding the lake.

The evolution of this body of water has gone from the halcyon Big Swamp days to the often hectic times of the canal era through the bustling days of the Amusement park to the 1960's decline. Buckeye Lake, steeped in much history and lore, today is a pleasant inland water lake ten miles south of Granville.

Daniel D. Bonar
Anthony J. Lisska
Granville Historical Society

A Note on Sources

Very little historical material has been published on Buckeye Lake. The Newark Public Library has a rare copy of *The Story of Buckeye Lake: Historical*, written by Joseph Simpson and published in 1912. While containing many historically interesting facts, the narrative is quite disjointed. In 1965, Kathleen Brown wrote a five part series on Buckeye Lake for the *Columbus Dispatch Sunday Magazine*, May 9-June 6; a year later she published a short history of the lake. Various interurban brochures from the time carry information about transportation and lodging at Buckeye Lake. Wally Chessman kindly loaned some of his material on the interurban line.

Chance Brockway, who knows more about the history and traditions of Buckeye Lake than anyone else, graciously shared information with us about the history of Buckeye Lake and kindly provided slides and photographs from his impressive and priceless collection. The Newark Public Library has collected a valuable file principally of newspaper items on various aspects of Buckeye Lake. The librarians there were always helpful as this research project was undertaken. We are indebted to Bill and Flo Hoffman for helpful suggestions on an earlier draft of this article.



The Columbus, Buckeye Lake and Newark Traction Co.

* Connections at Hebron for Buckeye Lake with every car from Columbus and Newark.
During theatre season cars will leave both Columbus and Newark at 11:00 P. M.

**Cars Run on Central Standard Time.
All Cars Have Smoking Compartments.
Special Rates to Picnic Parties.**

**Visit the Great Summer Resort
☞ ☞ BUCKEYE LAKE. ☞ ☞**

**UPDATE ON ACTIVITIES OF THE
BOARD OF MANAGEMENT
JUNE, 1989-JUNE, 1991**

Outgoing Secretary Jeane Randolph kindly provided the following list of activities undertaken by your Board of Management over the last two years.

The Board reaffirmed the commitment to publish **THE HISTORICAL TIMES** quarterly. A Photo Contest directed by Steve Katz was held over the Fourth of July in 1989; a Photography exhibit under the direction of Dan Campbell of OSU-N was held in 1991. The Civil War Roundtable began its monthly discussions in September, 1989.

In the Fall of 1989, the Board established the policy of having quarterly meetings with programs for members of the society. Programs have included the following: Roger Foster [Coshocton] portrayed canal song composer, Captain Pearl S. Nye; Anne Grimes with the dulcimer presented a program "Songs of Granville and America"; Brad Lepper [Curator of Moundbuilders State Memorial] lectured on "The Burning Tree Mastodon and the Licking County Ice Age"; a tour and presentation by Constance Barsky and Steve Katz on the restoration of the George T. Jones House; "Life in a Civil War Hospital," narrated and depicted by the Thomas Hankins Family; and the "Frontier Spirit" actors from Lancaster reenacted the early life of Ohio settlers.

The Fall Dinner Meeting has outgrown the Old Academy Building, where it was held through 1989. In 1990, the Fellowship Room of the Presbyterian Church was needed to hold the large crowd. The Society each year has participated in the December Candlelight Tour, opening the Museum and making available the Old Academy Building.

In November, 1989, President Eric Jones established the following regular committees for the Society: Finance, Program, Museum, Properties, Publications, Archives, and Membership. Members of the Board chair these committees and report monthly at the Board's meeting. Each committee submits a proposed budget to the Board at the beginning of each year.

In February, 1990, the Old Colony Burial Ground Restoration Committee was established under the direction of Flo Hoffman and Carl Frazier. Consultants from the Fannin-Lehner Preservation Associates of Concord, Mass., have worked with the Restoration Committee.

The Society joined the Ohio Association of Historical Societies and Museums and the Association for Gravestone Studies.

DOCENTS NEEDED

Fanchion Lewis and Ann Stout are actively recruiting Society members who might be interested in serving as Museum docents. If you would like to volunteer as a docent, please contact Fanchion or Ann in care of the Society: 587-3951.

PUBLICITY COMMITTEE

Under the Direction of Chair Tom Gallant, the Publicity Committee is putting together a brochure for the Society. In addition, Tom has written the informative news items about the society which have appeared in the Granville papers.

RESOLUTIONS

At the June Meeting of the Board of Management, the following Resolution was adopted:

*The Board of Management recognizes Jeane Randolph for her exceptional service as secretary for more than the past two years. Her meticulous minutes and records of membership have greatly facilitated the increased activity of the Society. **She has set a high standard for subsequent secretaries to maintain.***

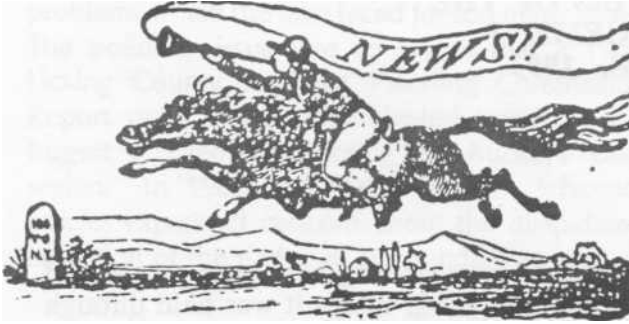
At the May Meeting, President Tony Stoneburner acknowledged the fine service of our two outgoing members of the Board of Management, Mary Ann Malcuit and John Rugg. Letters of commendation were sent to both former Board members.

NEW HISTORICAL MARKER AND FENCE

Buck Sargent's Properties Committee has placed the new Ohio Historical Society Marker in front of the Society's Museum. The antique fence, donated by the Licking County Historical Society and renovated through volunteer assistance, has been assembled and now encloses the front and side yards of the Museum building. The Board of Management is pleased with these developments enhancing the grounds of the Museum. Buck and Eric Jones arranged for the labor to accomplish the renovation and placement of the marker and the fence.

PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION

The Society presented a photography exhibition "Granville Through the Years" in the Old Academy Building over the Fourth of July. The members of the society acknowledge with gratitude Dan Campbell's creative work in designing and setting up this exciting exhibit of the Society's historic photographs. We also thank those who loaned their own photographs for display. More than four hundred people viewed the exhibit during the holiday weekend.



GROWTH OF THE SOCIETY

Under the dynamic leadership of Membership Committee Chair, Dan Freytag, the Society's membership continues to grow. Dan is actively soliciting new members with personal letters of invitation.

If you know of persons interested in joining the Historical Society, please let Dan know, in care of the society: 587-3951.

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

President:	Tony Stoneburner
Vice-President:	Thomas Gallant
Secretary:	Kevin Bennett
Treasurer:	David Neel

Term ends 1992:	Irving Chotlos Daniel Freytag Eric Jones
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Term ends 1993:	Harold Sargent Florence Hoffman Anthony Lisska
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Term ends 1994:	Ann Stout William Heim Richard Shiels
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FUTURE ISSUES OF THE HISTORICAL TIMES

The Editorial Board intends to publish the following articles in forthcoming issues of the newsletter:

Fall, 1991: An original essay by the founder of the Granville Historical Society, Charles Webster Bryant, on the extended network of beaver dams in the area northwest of the village. This handwritten essay was recently discovered in the Archives of the Society and has never before been published.

Winter, 1992: "Newark-Granville: The Ties that Bind," an essay written in 1974 by Society member Wally Chessman. Professor Chessman traces the connecting links between Newark and Granville.

The Editorial Board is interested in acquiring information about the day and boarding school, Our Lady of Mercy, run in the 1930's by the Franciscan Sisters of Joliet, Ill, in the Bryn Mawr House. Photographs, information about course of studies, students, years of existence, all such material is sought. If you have information, please contact Tony Lisska or Flo Hoffman in care of the Society: 587-3951.

THE HISTORICAL TIMES is a quarterly publication included with membership in the Granville Historical Society and is sent to all members. Questions, comments and suggestions may be sent to:

The Editors
THE HISTORICAL TIMES
P.O. Box 129
Granville, OH 43023-0129

Editorial Board: Florence Hoffman, Anthony Lisska, Mary Ann Malcuit, Samuel Schaff

CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

The final meeting of the Roundtable for the 1990-1991 year was held on Tuesday, June 25, in the D-Room of Denison University. Keith Piper arranged the meeting place. Carl Beamer led a discussion on "Mosby and the Confederate Guerrillas". The Roundtable will not meet in July and August.

The Roundtable will resume its monthly program on the Third Tuesday of September; unless notified, the regular meeting time of the Roundtable is the third Tuesday of the month. at 7:00 in the evening.

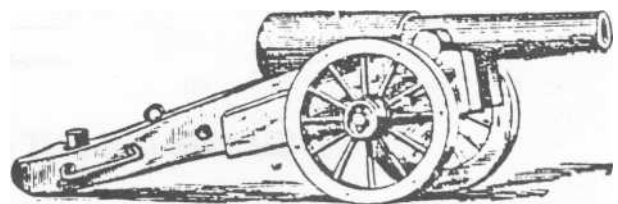
Topics for the Fall Meetings arranged thus far are the following:

October: "The Burning of Chambersburg, Penna," a video prepared by Civil War Historians in Pennsylvania, with Les Hicks leading the discussion.

November: "Andersonville Prison" with Walt Gowans leading the discussion.

Suggested topics and discussion leaders are requested for next year. If you would like to lead a discussion on a topic of Civil War Interest, please contact Tony Lisska at 587-0554/ 587-6573 or write in care of the Society.

All members of the Society are invited to participate in the monthly discussions of the Roundtable.





From the Collection of Mac Wood: A Park Attraction about 1920.

