

THE HISTORICAL TIMES

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Winter 1989

The Abolitionists in Granville

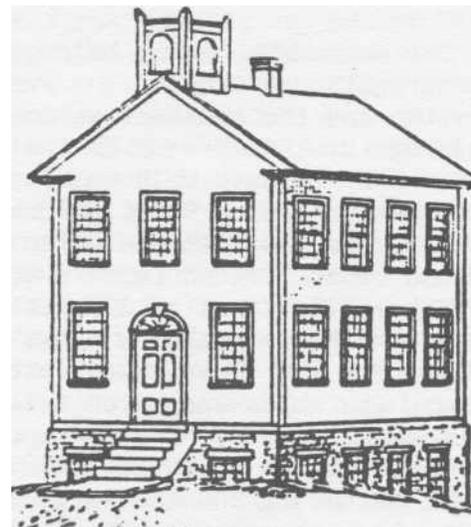
The Reverend Jacob Little, pastor of the Congregational Church, preached his customary New Year's sermon on January 1, 1835, in which he reviewed the village happenings of the year before. His theme was the "seven afflictions" visited upon his people by The Divine Providence in 1834: 1) the economic dislocation caused by the death of Lucius Mower in February and the immediate liquidation of his \$50,000 estate, estimated as several millions of dollars in today's economy; 2) the "black frost" of May 15 that destroyed the early planted crops; 3) the fiery lecture delivered to a Granville audience by a leader of the anti-slavery movement; 4) the prolonged drought that dried up the crops planted after the frost; 5) the great flood of July 1 after days of torrential rain; 6) the terrible sickness that continued for three months after the flood; and 7) the decline in religious faith as the result of these calamities.

Pastor Little gave more sermon time to the anti-slavery agitation than he gave to the drought and flood combined, and the cause was a western Reserve student named Hawley who declared that the colonization program of the Granville moderates was a "scheme hatched in Hell". Ashley Bancroft, an ardent abolitionist, remarked that "Hawley sure stirred things up", and that he did because he simply hardened the division between the moderates and the extremists, and the result was the strengthening of the local colonization society. Jacob Little combined alarm with scorn in

dealing with this incident; alarm because such agitation could divert his people from the path of righteousness which he was preparing for them, and scorn for the brash and intemperate Hawley which he compared with Rehoboam, King of Judah, who turned aside the counsel of his elders to go his impetuous way.

THEODORE DWIGHT WELD

The first three months of 1835 were peaceful enough, then the rupture surfaced in April when the second abolitionist came to Granville. He was 32-year old Theodore Dwight Weld, one of the 63 organizers of the American Anti-Slavery Society of 1833, and later its secretary. He was a direct descendant of Jonathan Edwards and a



The Granville Female Academy in 1834. The site of the first lecture by Weld is now known as the Old Academy Building.

brilliant scholar gifted with a "wonderful eloquence" and an impressive physique. He had been a ministerial student of Dr. Lyman Beecher at Lane Seminary in Cincinnati, and he had led 45 students in a protest against the Lane board of trustees, when it suppressed anti-slavery agitation at that institution. Weld was a close friend of Judge James Gillespie Birney, a Cincinnati abolitionist who was also one of the organizers of the American Anti-Slavery Society and who followed him in the office of secretary. Weld added to his activist triumphs by converting Henry Ward Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe to the cause of immediate abolition.

FIRST LECTURES

Theodore Weld gave his first local lecture in the Conference Room of the new Granville Female Academy building at Main and Elm Streets. The date was April 3 and the windows were open to the warm spring evening. The side yard was filled with an unfriendly crowd that pelted the speaker with a shower of eggs after he had spoken for about an hour. Weld calmly wiped the mess from his face and went on speaking without further disorder, but the angry crowd showed its displeasure by bobbing the mane and tail of Weld's horse.

The academy building belonged to the Congregational Church, and Pastor Little and the trustees were so alarmed by this breach of the peace that they refused Weld any further use of the Conference Room. Weld was then invited to speak at the unfinished house of the Deacon Leonard Bushnell which still stands at 337 West Broadway. The house lacked windows and doors but the floors were laid so there was ample space for a large audience. Weld stood at an upper window so that he could address the inside gathering and the large crowd that had assembled at the foot of Sugar Loaf. There was little disorder except for cat-calls and some shouting, but there was enough tension in

the air to alarm the village officials who persuaded Weld to leave Granville.

BANCROFT HOUSE MEETING

Ashley Bancroft offered his home for the third meeting, the newly completed stone house that still stands at 555 North Pearl Street and well beyond the village limits of those days. The meeting was peaceful on this occasion but Weld had much more to say, and he needed a larger meeting place, so he went to a small church on Jersey (now Morse) Road. Later on, he held meetings in a brick schoolhouse on Worthington Road about one mile south of Alexandria. After he had given a dozen or more lectures here and in Zanesville, The Abolition Society of America became a reality. At its organization meeting the members agreed to hold the first annual convention on April 27 and 28, 1836, in Granville.

The Granville opponents of The Abolition Society met on November 3, 1835 in the Methodist Church to revive The American Colonization Society and to draw up a set of resolutions supporting colonization as opposed to immediate abolition. These resolutions were signed by a dozen village leaders, and on March 3, 1836 Mayor Elias Fasset issued a proclamation bearing 75 signatures and warning the members of The Abolition Society that "we do hereby engage to use our best endeavor, by all lawful and proper means, to prevent any such public meetings from being held within the limits of our corporation".

CONVENTION IN GRANVILLE

The Abolition Society delegates ignored the warning of the mayor's proclamation but they avoided a direct confrontation by meeting in Ashley Bancroft's large barn which was nearly empty at this season of the year. The delegates were fully aware of the opposition to their meeting and they felt the need of some precautions. Ashley Bancroft secured the barnyard gate with heavy chains so that

The 1832 Ashley Bancroft **House**, site of the third Weld lecture. The Abolitionist Society **Convention** in April 1836, met in the Bancroft Barn.



intruders would have to climb the fence, and Samuel Langdon, the cooper, brought a wagon load of hoop poles that could be cut in half to serve as clubs in case of an attack.

The convention delegates included such notables as President Mahan and Professor Cowles of Oberlin College, and Judge James G. Birney, the Cincinnati abolitionist and Weld's friend. Among the delegates representing Granville were Joseph Linell, Orlando Thrall, Joseph Weeks, Samuel Langdon, Ashley Bancroft and his brothers Gerard and Dr. William W. Bancroft, Edwin Cooley Wright and his brother William Spencer Wright, and two college students, Samuel White, Jr. and William Whitney.

"THE HALL OF FREEDOM"

The two hundred delegates were a full day in arriving, and they were joined by about one hundred local spectators who came to support the abolitionists, to satisfy their

curiosity, or "to watch the fun if there was any action". As the delegates settled down for the business of the day they were struck by the novelty of their meeting place, and they promptly dubbed the Bancroft barn as "The Hall of Freedom".

The first meeting day passed quietly and the delegates conducted their affairs without interruption, but the opponents of abolition were gathering in the village from miles around. Mayor Fassett's proclamation was an excuse for some of the invaders to demonstrate against the convention, but for many others it was an opportunity to make mischief and create a disturbance. The second day of the convention's session continued on a quiet note, and it concluded its business at the end of the day. The delegates assembled the next morning to make their way back to the village, while the troublemakers worked on a barrel of whiskey at an East Broadway tavern. Some of them took positions along North Pearl Street as lookouts

to signal those at the tavern when the convention party began to move down Pearl Street toward Broadway.

THE GRANVILLE "RIOT"

The situation was aggravated by the women in the convention party. There were 19 women delegates, a number of town women among the spectators, and about 40 girls from the Granville Female Academy who had been excused from classes to observe the proceedings. The more chivalrous of the men delegates felt obligated to escort the academy girls to their boarding house at 221 West Broadway, a long mile from the Bancroft barn. It was the custom of the girls to walk in pairs so a file of men walked on either side to form a column of fours, and it was this apparent military formation that seemed to inflame the drunken mob. This column of several hundred people turned the corner of Pearl Street and Broadway to find the rest of the way crowded with drunken troublemakers and about one hundred village spectators. No one can be certain of the number of people crowding Broadway but some eyewitnesses reported 400 or more.

The following half hour was bedlam as the two forces met head on. The Town Marshall arrived on horseback and tried to restore some semblance of order, but he was promptly unhorsed and he fled the scene. As the column approached the tavern at Prospect Street and Broadway, someone in the mob shouted, "Let's egg the squaws!" and the column was the target for a shower of eggs. When the column reached Main Street it came upon the ditch that drained the pond behind the Methodist Church, and here the temptation was too great to resist. Some of the mob pushed a number of the girls into the muddy ditch, and a dozen fist fights broke out between the mobsters and the defenders of the girls. This soon became a general brawl that took a serious turn when both sides resorted to clubs.

The fighting continued on to Mulberry Street as the girls ran on to

their boarding house in the next block. Squire Elias Gilman lived a block to the north and he came out to recite the Riot Act but the mob shouted him down. There was great violence by this time and, although no one was killed, many on both sides were badly beaten. One victim was found in an unconscious state on a Broadway porch some hours after the fight had ended.

"I WEPT"

The most spectacular victim of the riot was Judge Birney who was unhorsed at the tavern on Broadway, and he suffered some rough handling before he was ordered out of town. He assumed what dignity he could and he refused to ride faster than a slow walk so he was pelted with hundreds of eggs as he rode down Broadway to Columbus Road on his bob-tailed horse. An Oberlin delegate wrote to Theodore Weld, when I saw Birney egged out of town by a mob, and no Christian or magistrate to punish the indignity, I could stand no more, I wept." That afternoon a violent thunderstorm dispersed the mob, and in the early evening, the Granville Band played a concert on the village square. Thus ended the day of riot, the only riot in Granville history.

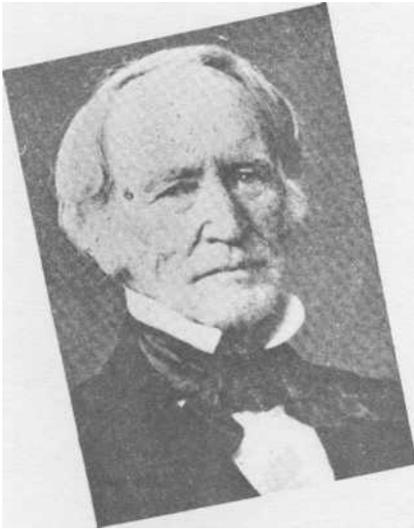
Horace King

The Historical Times is included with membership and is sent to all members of the Society. Questions or comments may be sent to:

Editors
The Historical Times
P. O. Box 129
Granville, Ohio 43023

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

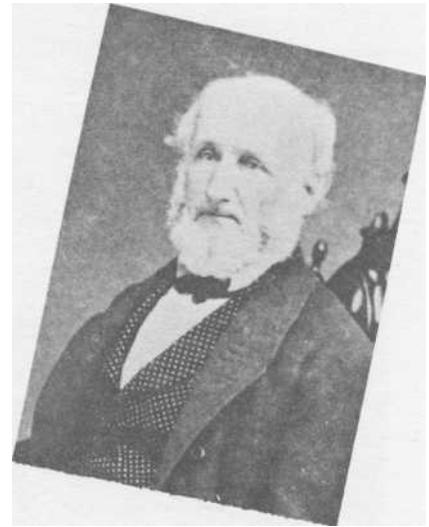
BEST WISHES FOR THE NEW YEAR!



Walter Thrall



Grove Case



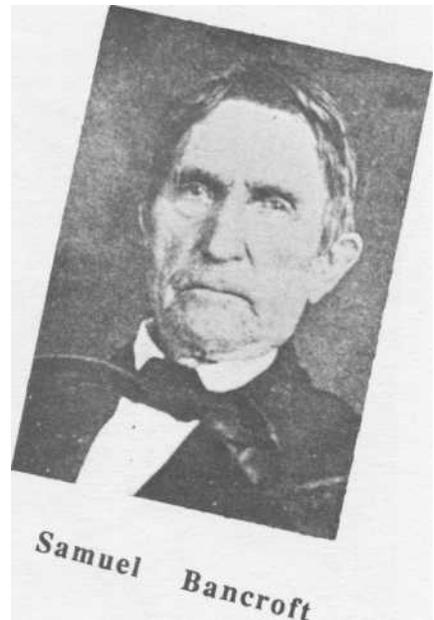
A. P. Pritchard



William Gavit



Elias Gilman



Samuel Bancroft

The opponents of the Abolitionists met on October 28, 1835 and decided to call a general meeting to revive the American Colonization Society. Their resolution, signed by twenty-six prominent citizens of Granville, is reproduced on the following page; we believe for the first time. Several of the signers are pictured above.

Resolutions passed at the November meeting stated that they considered slavery a great and growing evil, but the measures of the immediate abolitionists were "calculated to strengthen and rivet the chains of the slaves and perpetuate their bondage".

At a meeting of the citizens of this place, held at the house of Samuel Boardman on Wednesday evening the 28th inst. Genl. A. Munson was called to the chair and A. F. Richard was appointed Secretary

The object of the meeting was stated, and on motion, the following resolution was unanimously adopted.

Resolved that a general meeting on ^{Tuesday} the 2nd of Nov. next be called of the citizens of this place and vicinity at 6 of the clock P.M. to express their disapprobation of the proceedings of the Abolitionists and the expediency of reviving and sustaining the Colonization Society.)

Services Oct. 1835

Hubbard, Nathan
 Daniel Wilkinson
 Sylvester Spelman
 Knowles Linnel
 Levi Rose
 Dr. Cook
 A. Army
 C. C. Rose
 J. F. Felt
 E. F. Felt
 G. W. Case
 Wm. Savit

Self W.M.P.
 3 case
 Water Throll
 W. F. Richards
 Daniel Eager
 Samuel Burdett
 Murray Humbley
 A. F. Richard
 John Hought
 Samuel Boardman
 Elias Gilman
 E. Langford
 Daniel ~~Langford~~
 B. L. Moore

1700
 136
 1836

**The text of the Colonization Society Resolution
from the October 28, 1835 meeting is given below.**

At a meeting of the citizens of this place, here at the house of Samuel Boardman on Wednesday evening the 28th inst. Gen- A. Munson was called to the chair and A.P. Prichard was appointed Secretary.

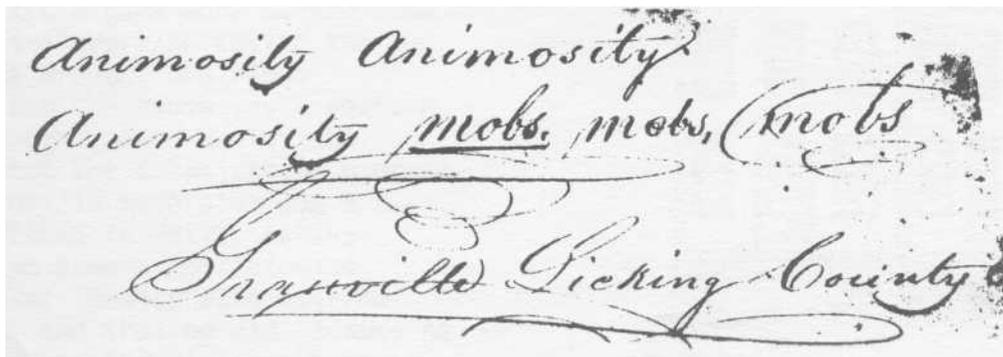
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Granville Oct. 1835

Sherlock Mower
Daniel Wildman
Sylvester Spelman
Knowles Linnel
Levi Rose
G. Cook
A. Avery
C. C. Rose
J. Fassett
E. Fassett
G. W. Case
Wm. Gavit

A. Munson
G. Case
Walter Thrall
W. S. Richards
Paul Eager
Samuel Bancroft
Chauncy Humphrey
A. P. Prichard
Sabin Hough
Samuel Boardman
Elias Gilman
E. Crampton
_____(?)
B. F. Mower



The back of the document carries this poignant comment.



From the Archives--

**The Samuel Langdon House on Pearl and Summit, built in 1834,
was a station on the Underground Railroad.**



The Granville Ohio Historical Society
Post Office Box 129
Granville, Ohio 43023