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THE CHURCH BUILDER IN NEWARK WHO BECAME THE HERO OF A WILLA CATHER NOVEL



Jean-Baptiste Lamy, the first resident Roman Catholic Pastor of the Church of St. Luke in Danville, had the Catholic community of Newark as part of his pastoral circuit. In 1842, Lamy, who eventually became the Archbishop of Santa Fe, built the first Catholic Church in Newark and named it after one of his favorite early modern French saints, Francis de Sales. Lamy's life was fictionalized by Willa Cather in her famous American novel, *Death Comes for the Archbishop*.

The **Church-builder** in
Newark
who Became the Hero of a
Willa Cather Novel

Many of us have read Willa Cather's *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, which is the charming tale of Bishop Jean Marie Latour, the courageous clergyman of the nineteenth century American Southwest. Latour, as Willa Cather's novel goes, was a French priest who, in the years immediately preceding the Civil War, became the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Yet few of us realize that the fictionalized hero portrayed in Cather's famous American novel indeed had a real-life counterpart, Jean-Baptiste Lamy. Fewer still know that Lamy spent his early years in the United States as a Roman Catholic pastor and circuit rider in Knox and Licking Counties. Furthermore, Lamy established and built the first Church of Saint Francis de Sales in Newark. In addition, a circuit mission for Lamy was a small community of Irish farmers living on what is today Jug Street in northern Jersey Township in Western Licking County. Eventually a church, named in honor of Saint Joseph, was built on the Jug Street site, where today only a small burial ground and a modest historical marker remain.

Traveling from Newark to his mission stop on Jug Street, Lamy certainly must have ridden his horse through the streets of Granville. One looks in vain, however, in Lamy's letters and reports for any reference to Granville.

The Son of Clermont-Ferrand

Jean-Baptiste Lamy was born on October 11, 1814 in the village of Lempdes near the city of Clermont-Ferrand in central France. First educated in his village, at the age of nine he entered the Jesuit school at Billom, a short distance from Clermont-Ferrand. On his eighteenth birthday, Lamy decided to embrace the religious vocation of the priesthood.

He matriculated at the Petite Seminarie of Clermont-Ferrand where he undertook the classical course then in vogue as a preparation for the later theological studies necessary for ordination as a Roman Catholic priest. He continued his education at the Grand Seminarie of Mont-Ferrand, which was then administered by the members of the Sulpician Order, historically the group of teachers entrusted with the education of future members of the Roman Catholic clergy. There, under the code of strict discipline then common in Sulpician schools, the young Lamy grew in knowledge, perseverance

and spirituality, all of which were to bode him well in his life's work.

While a student at Mont-Ferrand, Lamy became a close friend with another French seminarian, Joseph P. Machebeuf. These young men became life-long friends, living and working near one another in the United States for most of their productive lives. Machebeuf was two years older than Lamy, born in Riom near Vichy on August 11, 1812. Both were from middle class French families and were accustomed to the amenities of nineteenth century French village life, so different from their nearly half century work in the United States. In Cather's *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, Machebeuf is portrayed as "Father Vaillant."

Missionary Life in America

While students at the Grand Seminarie, Lamy and Machebeuf read voraciously about the work of their ecclesiastical comrades in the newly established republic in America. In 1833, both Lamy and Machebeuf attended a talk by the then elderly Bishop of Bardstown, Kentucky, Benedict Joseph Flaget, on the needs of the fledgling American Catholic Church.

Flaget a half century earlier had been a student at Mont-Ferrand and, in 1791, journeyed to the new American republic in order to escape the revolutionary terror in France. A veritable frontier



Joseph Machebeuf as Bishop of Denver in his later years.

apostle, Flaget undertook his missionary work in Indiana, Maryland and Kentucky for nearly forty years, with almost a quarter century administering the diocese of Bardstown. At the time of his appointment as bishop in 1808, Bardstown became the administrative center for the only Catholic diocese west of the Allegheny mountains and encompassed most of the hardscrabble frontier of Kentucky, Tennessee, Indiana, Michigan and Ohio.



The St. Francis de Sales Church Complex in 1870 indicating the Church and Rectory Lamy built in 1842.

In addition to Catholics from Maryland moving west, many European Roman Catholics were beginning to emigrate to the new American nation, and especially to the area west of the Alleghenies. The need for ordained clergy was almost insurmountable. The elderly bishop visited several European seminaries in the hope that a sufficient number of young men, both priests and seminarians, would answer his call for assistance and embark on the life of a frontier missionary priest and circuit rider.

The Influence of Bishop Purcell

Five years later, in 1838, the then bishop of Cincinnati, the energetic thirty-nine year old John Baptist Purcell, was touring Europe seeking missionary circuit riders to help in the still pioneer country of Ohio. Purcell was named the

second Bishop of Cincinnati, following the death in 1832 of the original Cincinnati prelate, Edward Fenwick.

As a missionary circuit rider in Ohio and then as Bishop of Cincinnati, Fenwick had made early visits to Licking and Knox Counties. In 1818, Fenwick established the first Roman Catholic Church in Ohio, St. Joseph's, located southeast of Somerset in central Perry County. The Diocese of Cincinnati which Purcell inherited encompassed all of Ohio. Purcell desperately needed ordained clerics to help in this vast area.

As ordained priests in the Roman Catholic Church, Lamy and Machebeuf were serving small village churches in the French countryside. But they had never forgotten their earlier desires for religious adventure and commitment in America. Both were deeply affected by the plea of Purcell and resolved to return with him to the new country and work in what Purcell referred to as the vineyard of the Lord.

Crossing the Atlantic, Traversing the Alleghenies, and Going Down the Ohio River

Leaving France on July 8, 1839, Lamy and Machebeuf, along with several other priests, sailed with Purcell from the port city of Le

Havre, the point of departure for so many Europeans emigrating to the United States. Their ship was the veteran North Atlantic wooden ship, the *Sylvie de Grasse*, with about sixty passengers quartered with Lamy and Machebeuf. Many more poorer emigrants were in the steerage. On their forty-third day of passage, the cry of "Land! Land!" was heard and the ship began the entry voyage into the Port of New York.

Purcell's party docked at the South Street docks, paid a quick visit to Bishop Dubois of New York, and then journeyed to Baltimore to pay their respects to the leader of the American Catholic Church, Archbishop Eccleston. There they transferred from canal boat to stage coach for the long trek across the Allegheny Mountains to Wheeling on the Ohio River. From Wheeling, the group traveled by steam packet down the Ohio River to Purcell's Episcopal see city of Cincinnati. Lamy and Machebeuf arrived in Cincinnati on September 19, 1839, after a full two months of arduous travel from the port city of Le Harve.

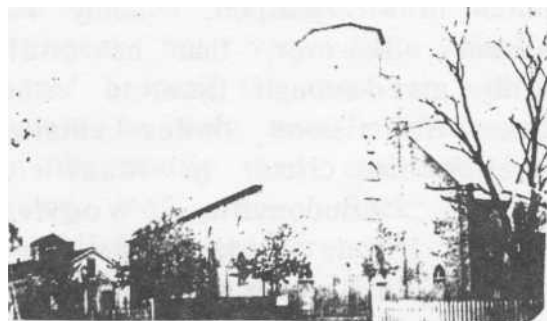
Once in Cincinnati, Lamy and Machebeuf thought they would have sufficient time to continue learning English, which lessons they had begun in earnest during the two month trip from France to southwestern Ohio. They also hoped for time to become b e t t e r

accustomed to their new homeland.

Within three weeks of their arrival, however, Purcell gave them their new ecclesiastical assignments in frontier Ohio; Machebeuf to the northern Ohio village of Tiffin with charge of what today is known as Fremont and Sandusky, and Lamy to the Catholic village of Danville in eastern Knox County. With little time for getting used to Ohio, Machebeuf and Lamy were off to begin their work as Roman Catholic pastors and circuit riders in the Diocese of Cincinnati, which then encompassed all of the state of Ohio.

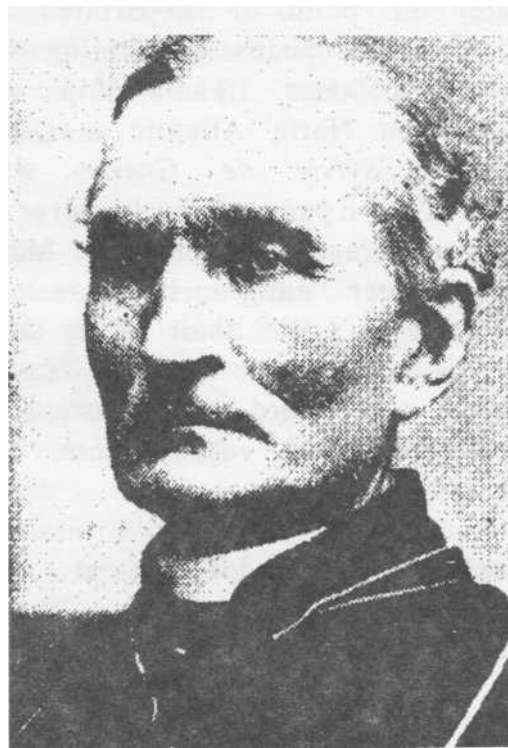
Lamy to Danville

Danville is a quiet pastoral village nestled in the rolling countryside of Eastern Knox County. Originally known as Sapp's Settlement--named after its founders, George and Catherine Arnold Sapp, native



An Early Photograph showing to the left, the Steeple of Lamy's Church and the Rectory he built in Newark.

Marylanders from Lord Baltimore's Catholic community, who emigrated to Knox County early in the nineteenth century-- Danville's Roman Catholic community built what was to become the seventh oldest Catholic Church in Ohio, St. Luke's, dedicated in October, 1824. Circuit Riders from the Dominican Order's Priory of St. Joseph's, founded in 1818 near the Perry County village of Somerset, the first Roman Catholic Church in Ohio, cared for the Danville community and the log church of St. Luke until Lamy arrived in 1839 as the first permanent pastor.



An Early Photograph of Lamy

An energetic person all his life, Lamy began his Danville pastorate with vigor and animation. He planned and built a new frame church near the site of the original log church, about a mile from the village of Danville. Purcell came for the dedication of the new St. Luke's church on November 10, 1840. The same year, Lamy set about building a small brick church in Mt. Vernon. Lamy was so busy, however, that he could hardly give enough time to either place. His mission duties entailed traveling the circuit to Mansfield, Ashland, Loudonville, Wooster, Canal Dover, Massillon and Newark. In a letter to Machebeuf at Tiffin, Lamy wrote that "I have bought a horse, and I am now a great `traveler': for I have many places to attend, and I don't stay

more than two Sundays a month in Danville."

Building a Church in Newark

A bit homesick for France, both Machebeuf and Lamy planned for a brief vacation in their beloved homeland. But they had few funds and much work to finish first in Ohio. Writing to his father, Machebeuf noted that their proposed trip to France "cannot be carried out until we have each built two churches, [Lamy' in Mt. Vernon and Newark, I at my two Sanduskys...." This is an early reference to Lamy's intention to build a church in Newark.

In late Autumn, 1841, Lamy attempted to obtain the deed to a Newark property so that he might begin to build the church. The deed in hand by February, 1842, Lamy set about constructing what came to be the Church of St. Francis de Sales. Wheeling and dealing with the pastor of the Church of St. John in Zanesville, Lamy wrote to Purcell that he would be able to buy windows and an altar from the church at Zanesville, and that he intended to get them "very cheap."

The Churches of St. Vincent de Paul and St. Francis de Sales

Lamy named the Church in Mt. Vernon after his favorite French saint, Vincent de Paul; another favorite early modern French Saint was Francis de Sales, and this saint became the patron of the new Church in Newark. This explains why two somewhat rural cities in central Ohio have Roman Catholic churches named after early modern French Saints--they were the particular favorites of the French worker-priest, who built the edifices, Jean-Baptiste Lamy.

Lamy visited Newark every fourth Sunday. At one time, he considered moving his parish site from Danville to Newark, the busy county seat of Licking County and then a bustling canal town.

The Newark Congregation

Lamy, it seems, enjoyed immensely his Newark congregation. He once wrote that there was "good spirit" in the members of his church. In the early 1840's, the Catholic congregation of Newark was mostly German.

Lamy noted that his parishioners had music in them; he wrote to his bishop: "We have then a very good choir of German Catholics with some fair instruments. They sing very well, but almost all in German, except the Kyrie, Gloria, and Credo in Latin [for the Sunday Mass], till they get some books of church music." He asked Purcell for some books of liturgical music and also for about two hundred dollars to help in rebuilding the fire devastated church in Mt. Vernon.

That he spoke but little German bothered Lamy about his work in Newark. He writes to Purcell: "One thing is wanted for me, it is the german language, and though I speak but very little English, could I speak the dutch so well, it would be very good." Interested in the bodily and spiritual well-being of his flock, Lamy established temperance societies when he could. He writes to Purcell that "great many in Danville have joined the temperance Society, and some in Newark."

Financial matters on the frontier were tenuous at best and catastrophic at worst. The early 1840's also witnessed a financial depression. Machebeuf notes in his letters to France how seriously the markets have been depressed. Nonetheless, Lamy was about to set upon the project of building two additional churches in the vast area which made up his traveling circuit.

A Bout with Self-doubt

Within five years of his coming to Knox County, the religious demands of the Newark congregation increased dramatically and he realized that he could not care for Newark appropriately with Danville thirty-six miles away. Newark was growing so much faster than Danville. Perhaps he should consider moving to Newark. The church of St. Francis was still not plastered.

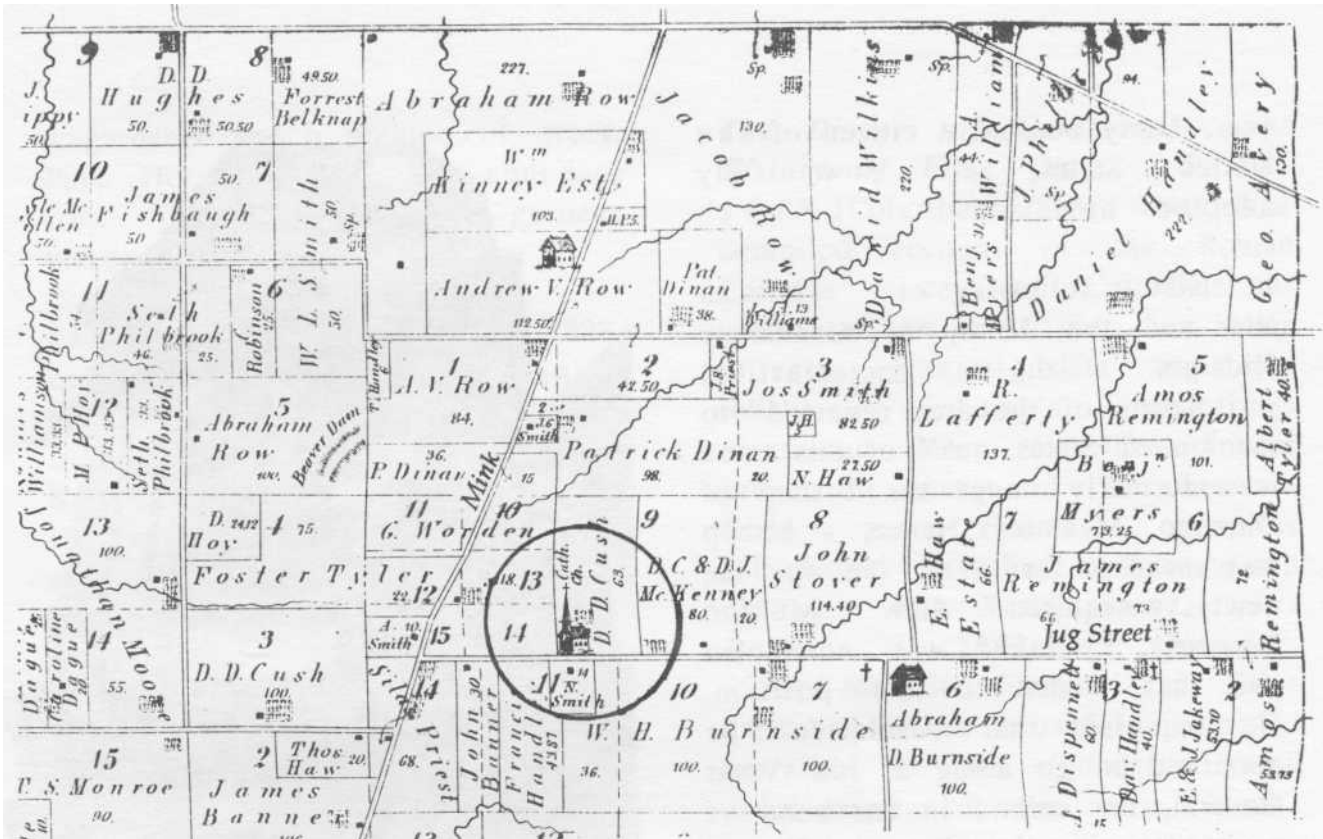
Lamy was beset with self-doubt--had he been too ambitious in building the church in Newark? He also built a modest rectory so he could have a place to stay in Newark. He writes to Purcell: "Perhaps I ought to be blamed to do so much in these hard times. In this case I beg your pardon but I do hope good intention will be some excuse..." A hundred dollar note was soon due on the Newark rectory.

Lamy continued to blame himself for perhaps assuming too much at Newark and undertaking more than could be done in a reasonable amount of time. He was so bothered about the financial burden of his Newark congregation that, he writes Purcell, he would pledge a substantial portion of whatever eventually he might inherit to assist in solving this financial problem. Lamy even asks Purcell if the Dominican Friars from Somerset might once again return to Newark as they had done sporadically before Lamy began his travels in 1839.

Riding the Circuit

Much of Lamy's time was spent in the saddle. He writes to Purcell that he has a "great many places to attend" and that he was almost "constantly on horseback." So much to undertake and so little time. A new worry was the growing community of Mansfield, especially with the forthcoming railroad. How, he asks Purcell, can he manage Mansfield too? But it is important that something be done because "there is no regular clergyman who attends Mansfield regularly."

No matter how much time Lamy was away from Danville, Newark, Mt. Vernon or Mansfield, nonetheless the members of his congregations held great love and



From the 1875 Licking County Atlas showing the site of the Jug Street Church in Western Licking County

respect for their French pastor from the village of Lempdes. His four principal stations had over three hundred families, and the many mission stops on his circuit held many more.

One of his mission stops was the little community of farmers residing on or near Jug Street close to its intersection with Mink Street in northern Jersey Township. Often he would swim his horse across a stream in spring, ride on a frozen river in the winter, traverse the overgrown trails of the summer, in order to be with his flock. Once he almost drowned with several other persons as they attempted

to cross a creek in a much too inadequate wooden boat.

To Kentucky and then to Santa Fe

In 1847, Purcell assigned Lamy to St. Mary's parish in Covington, Kentucky, directly across the river from Cincinnati. Of course, the people in central Ohio were sorry to see their beloved pastor leave. Years later, Francis Sapp, the grandson of George Sapp, the founder of Danville, wrote that Lamy's "name is held in benediction by all the old residents of the county, irrespective of creed." During this

year, Lamy became a citizen of the United States, his now fully adopted homeland.

In 1850, following the Mexican War and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the area reverted to the United States. All of this area was formerly under the Bishop of Durango, Mexico. Hence, a bishop was needed for Santa Fe in the newly acquired New Mexico Territory. Lamy was nominated and then named to this position. He requested that Machebeuf be permitted to go along as his Vicar General, the second in command of a diocese in the Roman Church. Lamy and Machebeuf traveled to Santa Fe and began the next chapter in their always eventful lives.

A Large Diocese

The Santa Fe diocese included not only New Mexico, but also large areas of five other huge western states: Arizona, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, and California. This land mass was larger than the whole of Lamy's native France. Paul Horgan's *Lamy of Santa Fe* is a marvelous narrative of Lamy's triumphs and travails in the former Spanish territory of New Mexico. Lamy's French training and culture were sometimes at odds with the prevalent Hispanic culture of the southwest. In 1868, Machebeuf became the first bishop of Denver.



A Statue of Lamy in front of the Cathedral of St. Francis which he built in Santa Fe.

Lamy brought his tremendous energy and organizational abilities to his new position. In addition to restoring twenty old churches and constructing forty-five new ones, in 1869, Lamy began building the magnificent Cathedral of St. Francis in Santa Fe. In his later years in Santa Fe, Lamy became somewhat of an ecological pioneer in the region, especially known as

a gardener and a planter of trees. Paul Horgan notes the abundant fruit crop Lamy's gardens produced.

Lamy died on February 13, 1888, nearly forty years after beginning his American church work in the little village of Danville in eastern Knox County, with an important stopover in the Licking County seat of Newark. A year later Machebeuf died in Denver.

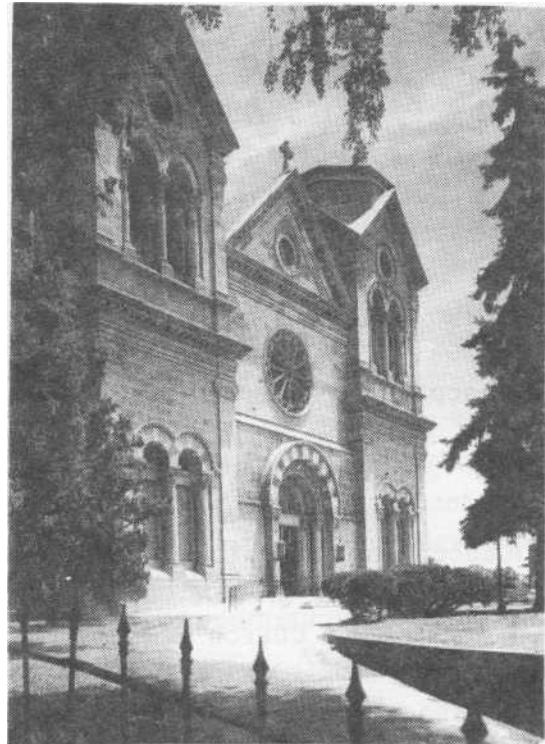
Anthony J. Lisska
Denison University and
Granville Historical Society

Note on Sources

The letters from Lamy used in this article have been left in his original halting English with the occasional mis-spelling and grammatical error.

The best biography of Lamy is Paul Horgan's wonderful account, *Lamy of Santa Fe* [New York, 1975]. This book is highly recommended reading for anyone interested in a general overview of religious life in the nineteenth century United States. Many of the letters quoted above are found in Horgan's book. William J. Howlett's *Life of Joseph Machebeuf* [Pueblo, CO, 1908] contains many letters from Machebeuf to his family in France. Horgan quotes quite freely from this cache of letters.

The Diocese of Columbus: The History of Fifty Years: 1868-1918 [Columbus, 1918], which is a compiled account of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Columbus, is useful for the most part, but some of its historical data are not reliable. Lamy's name is mentioned often as the pioneer priest for many of churches in Knox and Holmes counties established in the mid-nineteenth century. *The Sesquicentennial Book: 1842-1992* [Newark, 1992] for St. Francis De Sales Church provides a useful historical narrative of the foundation and development of the first Church.



Lamy's Santa Fe Cathedral Built in a Classical French Style

However, some of the dates for the foundations of other churches are incorrect. *The Bulletin of the Catholic Record Society* [Columbus, 1975 ff.] is devoted to publishing the history of the Diocese of Columbus.

Patrick W. Carey's *The Roman Catholics* [Westport, CT, 1992] contains a succinct biography of Lamy. James Hennesey's *American Catholics* [Oxford, 1981] notes the cultural difficulties Lamy and Machebeuf encountered in their dealings with the Hispanic Catholics in the American Southwest. Jay P. Dolan's *The American Catholic Experience* [Garden City, NY, 1987] also suggests these cultural difficulties.

There is a veritable historical squabble over the foundation date of St. Luke's in Danville. The marker in front of the Church proclaims it is the second oldest Catholic Church, founded in 1820. There is reliable historical evidence, however, that three other Roman Catholic churches were dedicated in Ohio before 1820. Moreover, additional evidence suggests that St. Luke's was dedicated in October, 1824; this makes the church the seventh oldest in Ohio. Victor O'Daniel has established this order of the foundation of Roman Catholic Churches in Ohio. For an account of this fascinating historical controversy, the interested reader

might consult the author's article, "O'Daniel and Mulhane on the Second Oldest Church in Ohio," *Bulletin of the Catholic Record Society*, [Columbus, OH, September and October, 1986].

The Ohio church communities mentioned in this article all survive today, with the exception of St. Joseph's Church on Jug Street in Western Licking County. Of course, newer physical structures have been built since Lamy's time in Ohio.

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From the President's Desk....

The Granville Historical Society is absolutely delighted by the acquisition of the Civil War correspondence and sword of one of Granville's native sons, William Henry Harrison Avery [1840-1917]. W.H.H. Avery was a member of Company D of the 113th Ohio volunteer Infantry from Granville. This gift was made possible through the generosity of the Avery Family and the efforts of Thomas Avery of California and our own archivist, Flo Hoffman. When a properly secured display has been acquired, these fascinating and valuable pieces of history will be featured in the Society's museum.

Kay Koeninger and family will soon depart for Yellow Springs, Ohio, where Kay's husband, Scott Warren, has accepted a position as Dean of Students at Antioch College. Kay has done a tremendous job as museum curator and advancing opportunities for the community to visit our small but quality

facility. She will be sorely missed; we wish Kay and her family well.

We appreciate the efforts of Cynthia Cort and John Kessler as they continue to push forward in upgrading our facilities and its service to our community.

Our Historical Society continues to add to its collection of enlarged turn-of-the-century photographs of Granville scenes and lifestyles, thanks to the efforts and expertise of former Board Member and Society Vice-President, Dan Campbell. Many of these larger than life photos were on display during the Fourth of July festivities at the Old Academy Building. The times were different but the atmosphere and ambiance captured in detail then remain the same today. We trust that you had the opportunity to visit the Academy Building and view these glimpses of yesteryear.

This fall, several exciting programs have been scheduled for your enjoyment. In September, we will hear from the authors of Celebrate 2005, a bicentennial book now being developed featuring the first 200 years of our Granville community. Later in the fall, Tom Avery will be visiting with us to tell us more about the life of William Henry Harrison Avery. Join us and bring a friend.

Dick Daly

The Bicentennial Publication Project

[Society Vice-President, Tom Martin, is chair of the committee discussing and implementing a substantive publication project celebrating the two hundredth anniversary of our village. Tom has kindly written the following account of this important society project.]

The community of Granville will celebrate its bicentennial in the year 2005. In preparation, our society has commissioned a series of local research projects.

The Society will aim for breadth. Particular topics for research will highlight the cultural, economic, educational, political, religious, and social history of the area. They will include the Mound builders, the Welsh and the immigrants of more recent times in addition to the party of New England migrants who arrived in 1805. Particular attention will be given to groups and developments not covered in earlier histories.

Researchers will be asked to present their work in a variety of formats. Some will present programs which will be open to the public. Some will publish articles in *The Historical Times*. Still others will publish in pamphlet form or in appropriate journals such as *Ohio History* or *Timeline*.

The Society plans to publish three bound volumes drawn from many of these research projects in time for the Granville bicentennial in 2005. Volume One will consist of essays which will together constitute a coherent history of the era. Authors already engaged for this project include Dr. Bradley Lepper of the Ohio Historical Society; Professor Richard Shiels of The Ohio State University-Newark History Department; Dr. G. Wallace Chessman, Professor Emeritus of History at Denison, Civil War expert Mr. Kevin Bennett of Granville, and Professors Donald Schilling and Jack Kirby of the Denison University Department of History.

These essays may draw upon and incorporate the findings of many specific research projects.

Volume Two will include a definitive bibliography of Granville references, additional essays of a topical nature, and selected primary sources. Volume Three will consist of historical photographs, important maps, and other graphic presentations.

The steering committee for this projects consists of former Granville Historical Society Presidents Tony Stoneburner, Dick Shiels, Tom Martin, and Rob Drake, along with Board of Management members Flo Hoffman, John Senn, Maggie Brooks, and Tony Lisska.



Captain William H. H. Avery enlisted in Co. D, 113rd Ohio Volunteer Infantry, which was known as Granville's Own, in 1862 and served in Tennessee. Late in the war he commanded Co. D, 42nd U.S. Colored Infantry, in Georgia. The sword he is wearing in this 1865 photograph and the letters he wrote home during the war, have been presented to the Society by his great grandson, Thomas L. Avery.

From the Archives

Computerized Mailing Lists

New Board of Management member, Cynthia Cort, is busy working at compiling a new and up to date computerized mailing list for members of the Society. Cynthia's painstaking work should provide for better mail communication with you, both through our general mailings and for the bulk mailing of The Historical Times.

If you have questions about your mailing address, please contact Cynthia in care of the Society.

Annual Meeting in April

The annual meeting of the Society was held April 22 in the Old Academy Building. Elections were held. Richard Daly is our new President and John Senn is our new Secretary. David Neel was re-elected as Treasurer and Tom Martin, former President, was elected Vice-President. Dick Shiels returns to the Board and Cynthia Cort is a newly-elected Board Member.

Dick Mahard and Buck Sargent were named life Board members.

This important project was inspired by Tony Stoneburner and enthusiastically endorsed by the Granville Historical Society Board of Management earlier this spring.

It is the hope of the Board of Managers that many members of the Society will become involved with this fascinating project as our village prepares for its bicentennial celebrations. If you have documents and/or photographs from Granville's history which you would be willing to share with the Society, please contact Tom Martin.

For additional information, please contact Tom Martin at 587-6631 [Work] or 587-0504 (Home).

THIS IS THE
SECOND ISSUE OF OUR
TENTH ANNIVERSARY YEAR
FOR **THE**
HISTORICAL TIMES.

We hope that the members
of the Society
have enjoyed our special
expanded format.

Editorial Board

Flo Hoffman
Maggie Brooks
Cookie Shields
Tony Lisska

Send comments,
suggestions or queries to:

The Granville Historical Society
P.O. Box 129
Granville. OH 43023-0129

**Upcoming Events and
Programs**

Dick Shiels and his Program Committee are planning the society presentations for the fall. The Summer Issue of **The Historical Times** will have more information.

Kevin Bennett will again chair the Civil War Roundtable Program Committee. The last event of the Spring CWRT program was a fascinating debate by Clarke Wilhelm and Jamie Ryan on the proper historical status of General George McClellan. A large group of society members and visitors attended this vigorous and lively debate held in the Old Academy Building.

**Museum Open for
Summer Hours**

Regular weekend hours again are being observed in the Society's Museum on East Broadway. If you have not visited recently, do stop by to see the many marvelous exhibits in our lovely museum. Bring a Friend for a visit!

**If you have not yet
renewed your
Granville Historical Society
Membership for 1996,
please do so soon.**