

THE HISTORICAL TIMES

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Major General Charles Griffin Granville's Forgotten Hero

As a community deeply steeped in its past, Granville has a well deserved reputation as a place acutely aware of its history. With several published histories, numerous scholarly articles, and a thriving historical society, it would seem that almost every event and personage associated with Granville, be they significant or otherwise, is amply chronicled and their record preserved. Yet the one individual, who by most objective criteria made the most significant contribution (at least on the national level) has been all but forgotten by his hometown. Mention the name of Charles Griffin to knowledgeable local historians and one draws quizzical, blank looks. There is but scant mention of him in Granville's histories and none at all in the file or records at the local historical society. Yet this son of Granville played a leading role during the Civil War, participating from 1st Bull Run until Appomattox. Cited by leading military historians as one of the finest combat leaders in the Union Army, he enjoyed a meteoric rise from battery commander, thence a brigade, division and corps command by war's end. In acknowledgment of his contributions, he was selected by U.S.

Grant to accept the Confederate surrender at Appomattox. He married into one of the nation's richest and most powerful families; he counted many friends among the great names of that period of American history. After the war he became the military governor of Texas during Reconstruction and distinguished himself as an untiring pioneer of civil rights for the newly freed blacks. This article then, is a small attempt to shed some long overdue recognition to one of Granville's most distinguished offspring.



Major General Charles Griffin

The Granville Years

The story of the Griffin family is to a large extent the story of early Granville. Joab Griffin and his two adult sons migrated to Granville from their home in East Hadden, Connecticut. Of solid Yankee stock, they soon made their mark and became prominent in the new Ohio community. Arriving in the first wave of settlers in 1805, Joab Griffin (grandfather to Charles) was charged with helping to plat the village and apportion the lots to the citizens. His two sons, Chester and Appollos, also became active in the community and became leading merchants. Chester, the eldest, operated a store on the north side of East Broadway until his premature death at the age of 30 in 1818. Appollos, the youngest son, formed a partnership with Lucius Mower. In 1819 these two traveled extensively to the south as far as New Orleans trading and selling goods until they had enough stock to return home and open the first real goods store in Granville. Appollos Griffin later opened another dry goods store in partnership with another of Granville's founders, Elias Gilman.

Eighteen years of age when he first arrived in Granville, Appollos Griffin brought along his wife Purnelia from Connecticut. The Griffins were active in the social and religious life of the new community. In 1827 when the Rev. Ahab Jinks broke off from the Presbyterian Church to form the Episcopal Church, Appollos Griffin was one of the original subscribers for the construction of St. Luke's Church and was later listed as a vestryman. It was to this family of industrious, pious Granville Yankees that Charles Griffin was born on December 18, 1825, the third of five children.

Little is known of Charles Griffin's childhood years but it is probable that he saw the bustle and progress that marked the thriving community from the prime vantage point of his father's store. In the mid-1830's Appollos Griffin sold his business and acquired a 290-acre farm on the Worthington Road. (The Griffin homestead still exists although there are several additions to the original house. It is the residence of the Neff family adjacent to the Raccoon International Golf Course, off S.R. 161.) The Griffin family also knew tragedy as the two eldest children Richard and Susan died suddenly of an illness in 1839. Like most Granville families, both past and present, the Griffin's placed great value on education and young Charles was enrolled as soon as possible in the Granville College, passing through the Primary, Preparatory and Collegiate departments of that institution. A picture of the young Charles Griffin emerges from a recommendation written by Prof. Paschal Carter in 1841 when Charles was 16:

"He is 5'8", of robust constitution, and holds a respectable standing in the sophomore class. In Latin, Greek and Mathematics he is respectable, in English composition he merits the praise of correctness. He possesses good talents, and sustains a good moral character and enjoys the confidence of those who are acquainted with him. Elegance and facility will be added with practice and society."

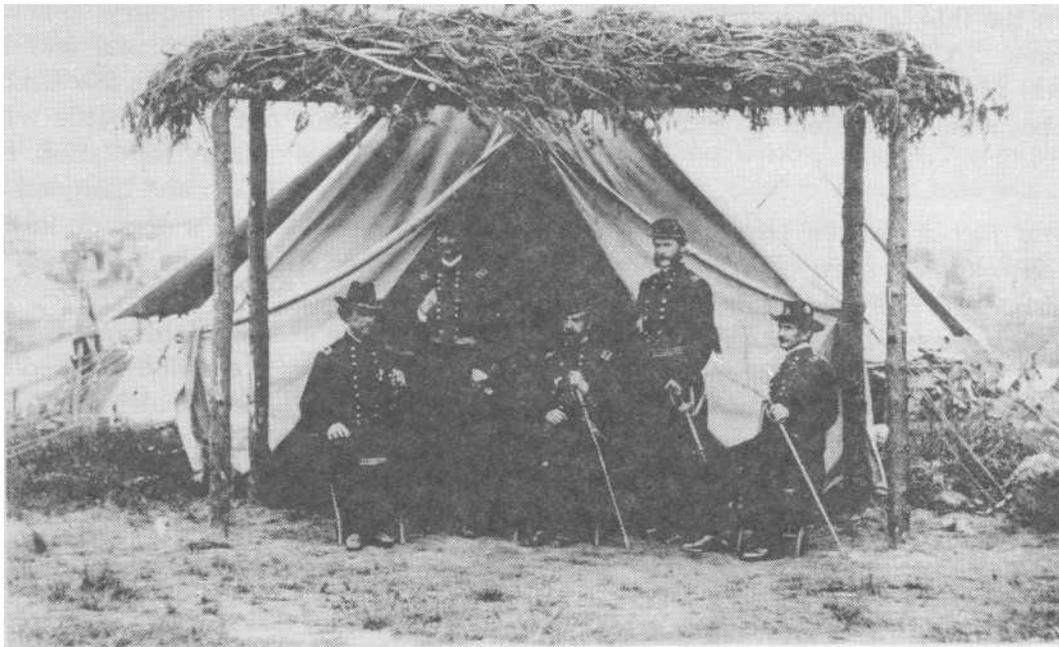
Young Griffin applied for admission to the United States Military Academy in 1841 but for reasons that are unclear he was not immediately accepted. Perhaps in a search for "elegance and facility" his parents sent him to St. Mary's College in Bardstown,

Kentucky and later for a short while to Kenyon College in nearby Gambier, Ohio. The Griffin's enlisted the assistance of Whig Congressman Joseph Mathiot and renewed the application in 1843. He was selected and ordered to report in July 1843.

Crucial Role at First Bull Run

Griffins record at West Point while not spectacular, was solid. He graduated in July 1847, ranking 23rd in a class of 41. He excelled in mathematics, but more importantly, he formed relationships with many classmates who later became prominent leaders during the Civil War. After graduation, he was commissioned in the artillery and was immediately sent to command a unit in Mexico. The

young officer arrived in Mexico too late to participate in the famous battles that secured that nation's capital for the advancing American army but he marked himself as a thorough and efficient officer. After the war Griffin settled into the life of a career Army officer seeing a number of different postings and assignments. He did see considerable frontier duty in the West including an expedition against the Navajo Indians. During this period his contacts with Granville appear to have been limited. He returned for several months in 1848 on sick leave. Also, he seems to have been in the area during September 1852 when his father conveyed the family farm to him and later in April 1854 when Griffin sold the family homestead to Levi Rose Jr.



Griffin, standing in tent opening, at left of Major General George Mead at Army of the Potomac Headquarters, 1865

Photo courtesy of U.S. Army Military history Institute

In September 1860, a time when the war clouds were gathering, Griffin returned east and accepted an assignment as artillery instructor at West Point. With the secession of the southern states and the outbreak of hostilities, Griffin was promoted captain and organized the so-called "West Point Battery," which received the designation Battery D, Fifth Artillery. Griffin trained this battery to such a level of proficiency that it was readily acknowledged as the best artillery unit in the Union Army. Griffin and his battery played a spectacular part in the Union attack at First Bull Run in July 1861. During this climatic battle Griffin and his battery played a key role that altered the outcome on that fateful day.

After initial Union successes at the outset of the battle, Griffin positioned his battery along the front line on Henry Hill. In a last ditch effort to turn the tide, a portion of Stonewall Jackson's Confederates advanced towards Griffin's battery. Griffin best describes what transpired:

"We had just arrived on Henry Hill for about 5 minutes when a regiment of Confederates got over the fence in my front. I gave the command to one of my officers to fire upon them. He loaded the cannon with canister and was about ready to fire upon them. General Barry rode up to me and stated "Don't fire there, they are your battery supports." I then told him that they were Confederates, as certain as the world. Gen. Barry replied "I know they are your battery supports". I then sprang to my pieces and told my officer not to fire and he dropped the canister. The infantry regiment marched towards us, fired, and that was the end of us."

While Griffin escaped this debacle unscathed, his unit was virtually annihilated and the cannon captured by the equally surprised Confederates. The loss of this battery put the Confederates on the flank of the other Union battery on Henry Hill, which then quickly disintegrated under close range Confederate • volleys. The Union position then became untenable and the Union forces retreated turning into a rout. Had the sound judgment of this son of Granville been followed, the Battle of Bull Run would in all probability been a resounding Union victory. It is interesting to speculate as to how the war would have been shortened and the course of American history altered had this occurred.

Civil War Hero

After the disaster of First Bull Run, Griffin made his way back to Washington D.C. with the routed Union army. A Board of Inquiry quickly exonerated him of any blame and he was recognized as one of the few Union officers to come out of the battle with any credit to his military reputation. He was promoted to Major and assigned as the chief of artillery in a division in the newly formed Army of the Potomac.

Griffin's accomplishments on the battlefield were equally matched by his conquests in the social field. After Bull Run, in a whirlwind romance, he courted and then married the eldest daughter of one of the country's most distinguished and powerful families, Sallie Carroll. A family that claimed an original signer of the Declaration of Independence, a former Governor of Maryland, and diplomats, the Carrolls were considered the preeminent social and political family of Maryland. With a

father who was the clerk to the U.S. Supreme Court and a brother, Samuel Carroll, who was a Union general, Griffin's marriage could not but help his military advancement. The wedding was considered by many to be the social event of the *year* in the capitol as it was attended by Mrs. Abraham Lincoln, cabinet members, and many ranking generals. While little is known of Sallie Carroll Griffin, she appears to have been a spirited, intelligent woman with a sense of adventure and independence unusual for the time. Indeed, she often accompanied her husband to the field and was not afraid to hold her ground in a well-publicized spat with Mary Lincoln towards the war's end.

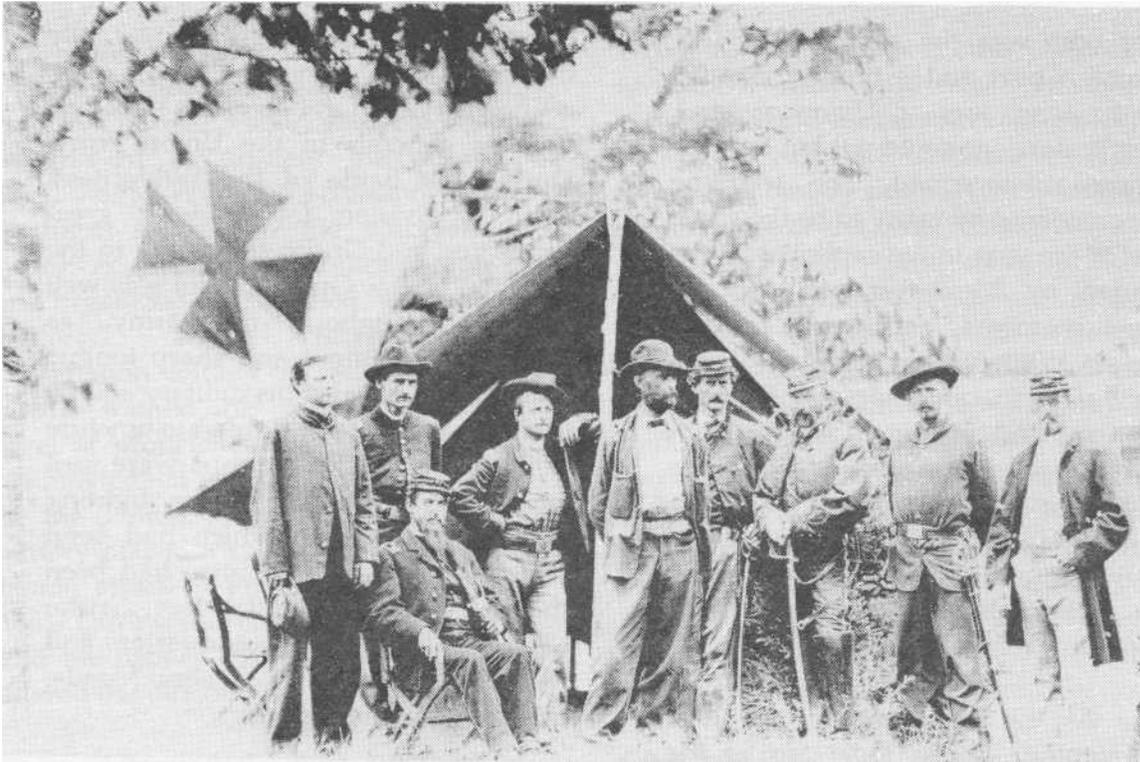
At the beginning of the 1862 campaigning, Griffin took part in the Peninsula Campaign. Noted as a "master tactician" he was rapidly promoted to Brigadier General and commanded a brigade during the bloody Seven Days Battles. His unit was in the midst of the fighting at Gaines Mills where his individual bravery under fire gained him the admiration and confidence of his troops. He also distinguished himself at the Battle of Malvern Hill where his brigade helped to blunt several desperate Confederate attacks. Griffin participated in all the major campaigns of the Army of the Potomac rising to division command in December 1862. He missed most the Battle of Gettysburg due to an illness but upon his return was lifted by his men and carried among cheers upon their shoulders to his headquarters. While many troops on both sides would begrudgingly admire their generals, this display of affection was extremely unusual during the Civil War period.

It was during the 1864 Virginia

campaign that Griffin really distinguished himself and won acknowledgment as one of the very best fighting generals in the Union army. During the Battle of the Wilderness, Griffin's division fought with great distinction and Griffin first came to the attention of U.S. Grant. Griffin was well known throughout the army as possessing a temper and sharp tongue that at times equaled his military ability. During a particularly desperate juncture of the battle Griffin's troops were sent into the hottest part of the fighting without the support which had been promised. After his advance had been checked with substantial loss Griffin rode angrily to army headquarters and confronted his superior, General Meade. According to one account:

"Griffin stated loudly that he had driven Ewell ³/₄ of a mile but got no support on his flanks and had to retreat. He implied censure and lack of ability on Gen. Wright and on his corps commander, Gen. Warren. Grant, who was nearby, approached Meade after Griffin had left, and asked Meade "Who is this General Gregg? You ought to arrest him". General Meade, who was well known for his own temper, soothingly responded to Grant that "It's Griffin, not Gregg, He's one of our best and it's only his way of talking."

Despite this dubious first impression, Griffin proved his worth throughout the 1864 campaign as his division acquired the reputation of being the troops to count on in difficult situations. In this effort Griffin was ably assisted by one of his brigade commanders, General Joseph Chamberlain of Little Round Top fame at Gettysburg. The two became fast friends and upon Griffin's death, all of his war memorabilia was sent to Chamberlain.



Charles Griffin, at center with slouch hat, with his staff. After the battle of Five Forks he commanded the Fifth Corps whose flag with Maltese Cross flies at the left.

Perhaps Griffin's finest hour came in September 1864 at the Battle of Pegram's Farm. In that engagement Union forces looking to cut the important Weldon Railroad were surprised and in danger of being routed. Again Griffin's division was sent in to the point of greatest danger and turned the tide. Riding ahead to the scene of danger Griffin was described thusly by a witness:

"and amid it all then Gen. Griffin came along, resolute, heroic, impressive and with assuring words and comforting promises of help. The wavering lines stiffened, strong men were strengthened, and the weak made strong. From now on it was his fight and his presence in inspiring the men was almost equal to the promised support of his battalions."

Receives Surrender at Appomattox

Promoted to Major General, Griffin played a key role in the last acts of the dying war. During the key battle of Five Forks, he was put in command of the Fifth Corps upon the controversial dismissal of Gen. Warren. In this role he aggressively pursued Lee's army through Virginia finally intercepting and bringing the proud remnants of the famed Army of Northern Virginia to bay at a small village called Appomattox Courthouse. He there personally witnessed the meeting between Grant and Lee and was bestowed the honor by U.S. Grant of arranging and accepting the surrender of Confederate forces. On the return to Washington D.O after the surrender, Griffin was informed of the assassination of Lincoln, whom he much admired. What followed was a

most unusual and little-known meeting of the leading generals of the Army. During this meeting it was agreed that if the worst fears of the generals were realized, if the government became inoperable and the nation thrown into anarchy, then the army would march on Washington and make Grant military dictator until constitutional government could be restored. Fortunately, none of these apprehensions came true.

After leading the Fifth Corps in the Grand Review, Griffin, like most regular army officers, cast about for meaningful assignments. He was posted to command the District of Maine where he spent time with his good friend Chamberlain and sat on various armament boards. Like most regular officers, Griffin was reduced in rank to Colonel. Bored with the lack of challenges and the Washington social scene, Griffin gladly jumped at the opportunity for adventure and he was sent to the Rio Grande frontier to report on the French intervention in Mexico. Shortly thereafter he was assigned to command the 35th U.S. Infantry, one of the occupation regiments assigned to Texas in July 1866. Enroute, he was designated to be the commander of the Military district of Texas.

Military Governor of Texas

When Griffin arrived on the Texas scene, he found the federal Reconstruction program in shambles. Texas and the other Confederate states were still in the midst of post-Civil war occupation while the federal government debated their status within the reconstituted Union. While there was a popularly elected civil government, the military district commander was the ultimate authority within these states. Not surprisingly, ex-rebels were loath to submit to the

Reconstruction which afforded many civil rights protections to the newly freed slaves. To gain an appreciation for the problems Griffin faced: the governor was an ex-Confederate, the two U.S. Senators were uncompromising rebels, the state legislature had passed the notorious Black Codes, refused to consider the 13th Amendment, rejected the 14th Amendment outright, proposed to organize a state militia composed of former Confederates, blacks and Freedman's Bureau personnel were under constant harassment and in some cases, were being murdered and injured. Add to this that Indian incursions required that most of the troops sent to restore federal authority were committed to frontier protection.

Griffin, while not politically active, was a die-hard Union man. While it is unknown whether he personally agreed with the Reconstruction policies, as a professional soldier, he was dedicated to following orders. It was these tough and reliable qualities which led U.S. Grant and Gen. Philip Sheridan to select him for this difficult post.

Griffin immediately set to work. In those communities where blacks and loyal Union citizens were harassed and intimidated, soldiers were sent out to restore order and assist Freedmen's Bureau officers with their work. Protection was also provided to voting registrars and Griffin oversaw an aggressive effort to register newly eligible black voters and to protect the registrars, a number of whom had been murdered prior to his arrival. Griffin also issued a public accommodations law which was among the first in the nation that forbade discrimination based upon race. Griffin also took an interest in the number of blacks

incarcerated in Texas jails, particularly in the state penitentiary. He recommended that many prisoners be released because they were serving time for crimes that would have merely called for a whipping during the slavery period. He also publicly stated his belief that they were unfairly convicted because Texas courts excluded blacks from testifying and from being jury members.

As might be expected, the Texas civil authorities were outraged at these ideas and attempted to impede and backslide at every opportunity. Undeterred, Griffin further issued an order allowing any military commander to take any case involving a black citizen out of civil or criminal court and send it to him for review. He then required that all potential jurors take an "ironclad oath" to serve which included a provision that one had never aided the Confederacy. This effectively limited jurors to blacks and pro-Union whites. He also authorized voting registrars to exclude any citizen who had latent Confederate sympathies. This was far and away the most aggressive implementation of Reconstruction policies and raised serious issues of military abridgment of civil government. The result was a vehement protest by the Governor that went all the way to Washington and brought in U.S. Grant. The commanding general of the army finally ruled that Griffin's was perhaps overzealous and a number of reforms were rolled back. Griffin responded in kind and compiled sufficient evidence that the rise in crime and defiance of federal government was directly attributable to the "disloyal Governor and his civil officeholders". Citing the argument that *"there is little security for those in Texas who love the government when the laws are executed by*

those who hate the government," Griffin obtained permission to remove the Governor and a number of other judges and officials and to replace them with loyal Union men.

Suddenly, when it appeared that Griffin was gaining the upper hand, a yellow fever epidemic swept up the Texas coast from Mexico. Attention turned to fighting the dreaded disease that was killing thousands along the coastal areas and to sending supplies to afflicted areas. With his headquarters in Galveston, one of the worst hit spots, Griffin was tireless in his efforts to



Griffin Family Marker in the
Old Colony Burying Ground
Granville, Ohio

combat the disease and bring in needed military physicians and medical supplies. The army authorities recommended that he move himself and his family away until the epidemic passed with the cooler weather. Griffin refused, likening his leaving to abandoning a post during battle. Tragically, Griffin's family contracted the disease, his 5-year-old son Charles C. Griffin died on September 5th (His only other child, William died in infancy in 1864). Then Griffin himself fell ill and he died on September 15, 1867 at the age of 41.

Postscript

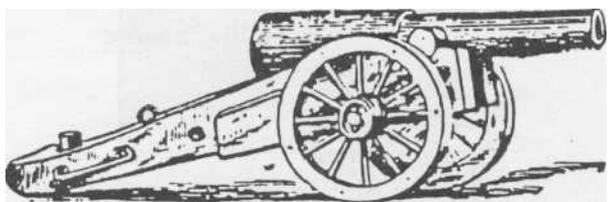
Griffin's untimely death was a disaster for the Reconstruction in Texas. Replaced by a Democrat General who was unsympathetic with the aims of Reconstruction, the civil rights measures implemented by Griffin were soon dismantled. On a personal level, Griffin's body (and that of his son) were taken to Washington D.C. where they were interred in the mausoleum of the Carroll family at the historic Oak Hill Cemetery. Interestingly, Griffin was buried in the same crypt where young Willie Lincoln had been interred. The Carroll's had offered the use of their tomb to the grieving Abraham Lincoln

and Willie's remains were there from 1862 until they were transferred with those of his father to Springfield, Illinois in 1865. Griffin's wife, Sallie, married Count Ezterhazy of Hungary and passed her remaining years in Europe.

Proud, brave, and at times abrasive, Charles Griffin certainly charted a path in American history that is unequalled by any other individual who called Granville home. A ramrod stiff professional of exceptional ability, he made major contributions on the battlefield and has been acknowledged by a pre-eminent Civil War scholar as the best division commander in the Union army. Although a soldier by profession, he also demonstrated great zeal and ability in restoring the rule of law and implementing civil rights for the newly freed blacks in post-war Texas at a time when it was politically unpopular to do so. With a life that was tragically cut off in its prime, Charles Griffin has unfairly slipped into the pages of historical obscurity. His gravestone inscription is but a simple "*Honor the Brave*". Having been forgotten by his hometown, this article is but a small attempt to rectify this oversight.

B. Kevin Bennett

The Civil War Roundtable



The final Spring meeting of the Civil War Roundtable will be held at 7:30 p. m. on May 19th at the Old Academy Building. Ted Collen, retired aerospace engineer, will present Aerostats Blue, Aerostats Gray, a look at the Union and Confederate balloon services.



Museum To Open April 25

The Museum will open for the season Saturday April 25, 1998. Regular museum hours until late October will be **Saturday and Sunday 1:00 - 4:00 p. m.** Volunteers, under the direction of Cynthia Cort have been reviewing the Museum holdings and recording them in appropriate data bases. Over the years, records of acquisition and holdings have been kept in many different forms. Cynthia is leading the effort to regularize these records in a comprehensive, searchable database which will allow the museum to better serve its patrons. During the Winter it has become a tradition for volunteers to show up on Wednesdays to help with this important project.

On Saturday, January 24, volunteers worked on the Museum attic (yes the Museum does have an attic with a high outside door facing St. Luke's Church across the alley), and found many things that were "in storage." With dusting and cleaning, many of these material are now integrated into museum displays. George Wales has led the effort to paint and spruce up the interior of the museum so the displays visitors will see at the April 25th opening will be both "new" and "old favorites" against a fresh backdrop. The museum committee hopes to eventually concentrate the farm equipment holdings into a display in the Old Academy Building.

The Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Society was held April 14. The Reverend Jacob Little returned to Granville and read an excerpt from his famous New Year's Sermons. The "congregation" sang a hymn especially written for the Reverend Little's return visit to Granville in 1874. He was portrayed by James Boggs and was introduced by his late parishioner, Elias Gilman portrayed by Richard Sheils.

The annual election was held. New officers elected by the members were: President, Maggie Brooks, and Vice President, Dick Daly. Lance Clarke, John Kessler, and Tom Martin were elected to the Board of Management for three year terms.

Board of Managers
of
The Granville Historical Society

<u>President:</u>	Margaret Brooks
<u>Vice President</u>	Richard Daly
<u>Secretary</u>	John Senn
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Class of 1999
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Class of 2000
Cynthia Cort
George Wales
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Class of 2001
Lance Clarke
John Kessler
Thomas Martin

The Old Colony Burying Ground

New in the Old Colony is a stone seating area near the flagpole. Designed to be appropriate for a 19th century cemetery, it was made possible by a landscaping grant from the Granville Foundation. Walk up and admire it. It represents a major step in the long range plan by the Old Colony Board and the Volunteer Corps to transform the Old Colony into a beautiful historic park which will be an asset to the community. Additional seating area are planned.

This Seasons work in the Old Colony restoration received a "jump start" on April 4, when a group of 35 Denison fraternity and sorority members spent the morning cleaning up the grounds, pulling weeds and spreading mulch. Assisted by several members of the regular volunteer group, an impressive number of fallen branches and weeds were dispatched.

Regular work days for the 1998 season will begin on May 9. Jim and Minxie Fannin, from Fannin-Lehner Preservation Associates in Concord, MA will be with us during the first two weeks on May and will direct the May 9 session. Their knowledge and enthusiasm is contagious, and everyone is welcome to pull on their jeans and work shoes and come to help beginning at 9:00 a.m. No special strength or skill is required. There are jobs for all!

Scheduled work days for this season will be:

May 9	June 6
June 27	July 18
August 8	August 29
September 19	October 10

The Fannins will be with us again on August 8.

The Old Academy Building

Members who attended the Annual Meeting admired the beautiful wooden floor in the Old Academy Building which have been sanded and re-finished. Because of the attendant dust, the windows were washed inside and out and the curtains washed and ironed. The ceiling fans, gift of Marian and Dick Mahard in 1994, have been cleaned and dusted.

A paved walk and ramp to enable handicapped person, or anyone who has trouble walking or climbing stairs will be installed this Spring. The generosity of the Granville Rotary Club which donated funds for construction and our good neighbor Richard Mahard, who will allow his driveway to be used as a drop-off point, have made possible this much needed facility. We await approval of an Ohio Historic Marker for the Old Academy.

The Society is grateful to Richard Mahard for his continued oversight and work on this important historic building.

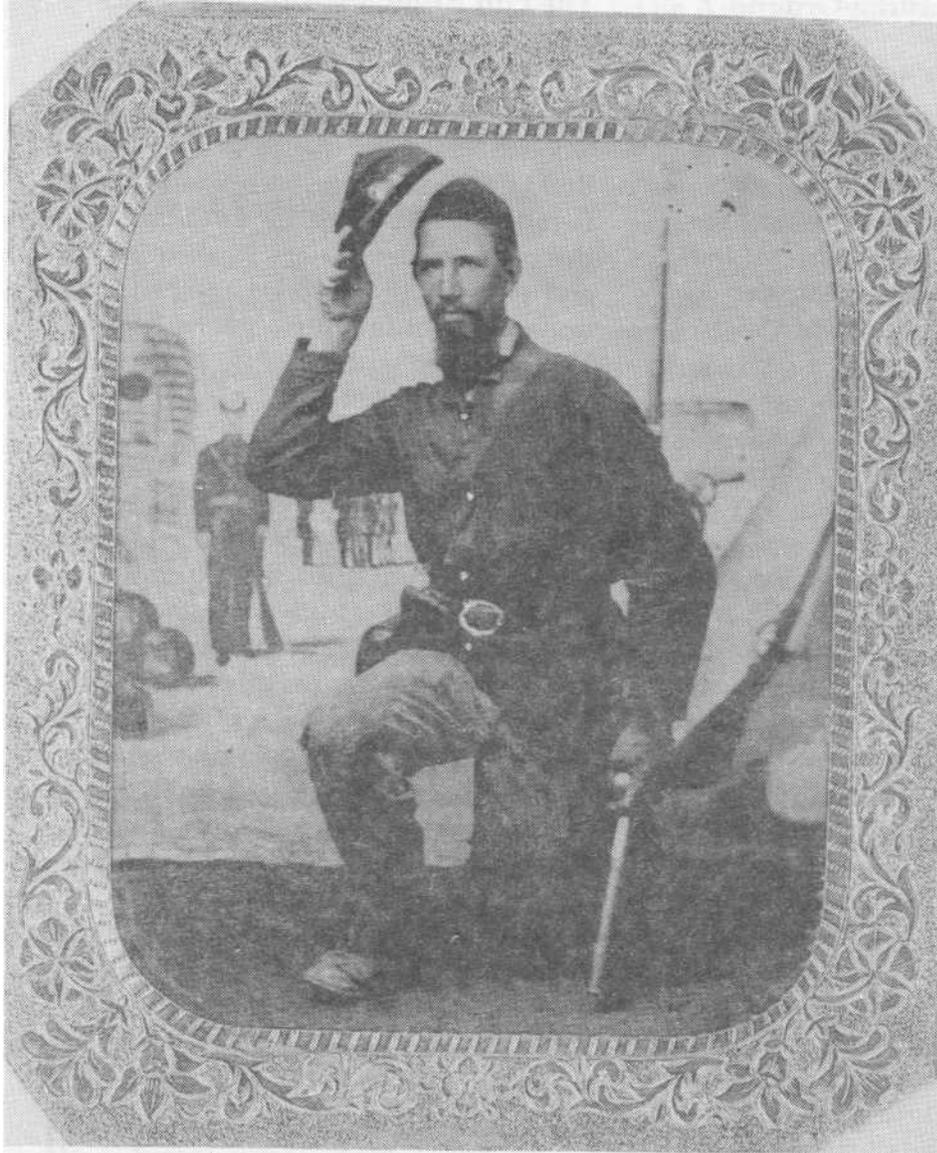
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suggestions for future articles.*

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Granville, OH 43023-0129



An unidentified
Union Soldier
of the Civil War

*Original tintype
from the Archives
of the Granville
Historical Society*

Annual Old Colony Walking Tour, June 10, 1998

Don't miss the Annual Old Colony Walking Tour to be held on June 10 at 7:30 p.m! Charles Blanchard and his wife will tell you about their family and their furniture business on Mt. Vernon Road , now known as North Street. Learn more about Lucius Mower, one of early Granville's most prominent and successful business men whose early death nearly caused a financial panic in the community. Theophilus Rees will greet you at the large gate to the cemetery. Refreshments information and images will follow the tour at the Old Academy Building. Bring the family and join us on this June evening.