

THE HISTORICAL TIMES

NEWSLETTER OF THE GRANVILLE, OHIO, HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Summer 1993

A TRIBUTE TO BILL AND ALMA UTTER



Professor and Mrs. William Utter host Governor and Mrs. Frank Lausche and Mr. and Mrs. Henry Eaton at the dedication of the Granville Historical Society Museum in 1955. Mr. Eaton served then as President of the Society. [Photograph courtesy of Mrs. John O'Neill.]

This issue of The Historical Times is dedicated to the memory of two persons intimately connected with the history of Granville and with the promotion and stewardship of the Granville Historical Society and its museum on East Broadway. William Thomas Utter, Professor of History at Denison University, mayor of Granville, author of the history of our village, and Alma Lucas Utter, Newark Advocate reporter and chronicler of Granville village events.

On Sunday noon, July 18, 1993, a plaque in honor of Bill and Alma Utter was unveiled dedicating the beautiful new white iron fence around their beloved museum to their memory. On that thoughtful and significant occasion, Professors emeriti of Denison and long time contributors to historical matters of our village, Richard H. Mahard and G. Wallace Chessman, presented moving reminiscences of the Uppers. Prior to the Museum fence dedication, a service at the First Baptist Church of Granville remembered the Uppers and their commitment to the religious life of the village. Their son, Professor William Lucas Utter, his children and grandchildren, journeyed to Granville to participate in the July 18 events.

The editors of The Historical Times are pleased to present the four addresses which contributed so much to the Society's efforts remembering the Uppers and their importance for our village.

THE STORY OF THE MUSEUM FENCE

Let me tell you about this fence and memorial plaque project which culminates this day, four and one half years after commencement. It began in late December of 1988 upon the death of Alma Utter. Alma's friends contributed a substantial sum of money to the Granville Historical Society in her memory. A suitable special use of this money was desired. About that same time it was clearly evident that the lawn in front of the Museum building was suffering from too much cross-cutting by persons wanting access to the ATM machine of the Park National Bank. An iron fence similar to the one guarding St. Luke's was an obvious answer. A search was commenced for an antique fence [we thought it inappropriate to consider a brand new one] but we had little luck. However, good fortune finally came our way. The Licking County Historical Society learned of our need and offered to contribute sufficient lengths of an antique fence which once enclosed the lawn of the County Children's Home on East Main Street in Newark.

Much work was necessary to prepare the fence for installation. Buck Sargent, [Bless his heart!] took charge of this. [He's the one who acquired the fence in the first place so it served him right!). First there was sand-blasting, then welding on of new posts and connectors of sections, then prime coat painting. After all

this was accomplished, the installation began. Holes had to be dug to receive the cement to support the posts properly. In doing this work we verified an already known fact. The fact is that any building in Granville built of stone or with a stone foundation is surrounded with a lawn obscuring hundreds of pieces of waste stone at varying depths. Each buried chunk, usually larger than the hole's diameter, is mischievously located exactly where a post hole is needed. A few years ago, I established my own personal verification of this fact--I encountered buried fragments in five out of seven post holes! I propose that this inevitable exasperating occurrence be hereafter known as the operation of Jones's Law in recognition of all the Welsh stone masons responsible for covering up the rock debris so expertly.

Fence erected, it was time for spray painting. Spray painting an iron fence is a process so wasteful it is rivaled only by NASA and Pentagon procurement procedures. And it is messy! And after the spraying, the job is not complete. Touch up by small brush is needed. For example, there are exactly one hundred and sixty three of those cute angels and each has two wings as you can plainly see. The wing pits of every angel had escaped both the prime coating and the so-called final coating. Man the brushes, Buck and Dick! But the trials and tribulations are now behind us and we are pleased with the final product.

We are delighted that three generations of the Utter family join us this day to dedicate this fence to the memory of two remarkable persons, William Thomas Utter and Alma Lucas Utter who were truly exemplary citizens of Granville.

Mr. President, let the unveiling of the plaque now take place.

Richard H. Mahard
July 18, 1993

WILLIAM T. UTTER

When Bill and Alma Utter first came to Granville in 1929, with three-month-old Bill in their second-hand Chevrolet, they did not move at once into that house we remember so well, the two-story white frame that still stands on the southeast corner of Pearl and Elm. But eight years later, having progressed from 150 Thresher [1929-30] to 467 W. Broadway [1930-32] to 202 Thresher [1932-37], they did settle down at 204 S. Pearl [Telephone number: 8313!!!].

One entered off Elm through the side door, into the sitting room where they usually entertained; the front parlor held Bill's collection of musical instruments and was for formal occasions. That sitting room was delightfully informal, the dining room and kitchen most hospitable, and the sherry a real treat for young faculty in the Fifties in dry old Granville.

In the early Fifties, Bill moved his office out of Cleveland Hall uphill into old Talbot, two flights up the center stairway. He would enjoy that old building dating from 1872; we all did. And students would continue to relish his classes, for he was renowned as a "great teacher." "With his droll wit and homespun way of presenting American history," one prominent alumnus of '37 [Loren Souers] later recalled, Dr. Utter "probably was loved by more Denison students than any faculty member of his era."

As a Californian who came back east to college in Missouri and university in Illinois and teaching in Ohio, Bill Utter reversed our country's westward migration. But the American frontier was his real love, and his Volume Two in the six-volume history of Ohio that came out in the Forties is a masterful study of the period 1803-1825 in this state. We all would have enjoyed his classes, not least on the last class day when he'd bring in his bassoons and other woodwinds for musical demonstrations! !

Bill Utter found time to participate in extracurricular doings too, from Beta War parades to ODK [a Denison service fraternity] meetings in faculty homes. But it was in the village that his political interest led him through council into the Mayor's office in 1943-45. And it was for the village that he labored to create this Historical Museum and the sesquicentennial history that he



at DENISON

GRANVILLE, OHIO

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A Tribute to Bill Utter

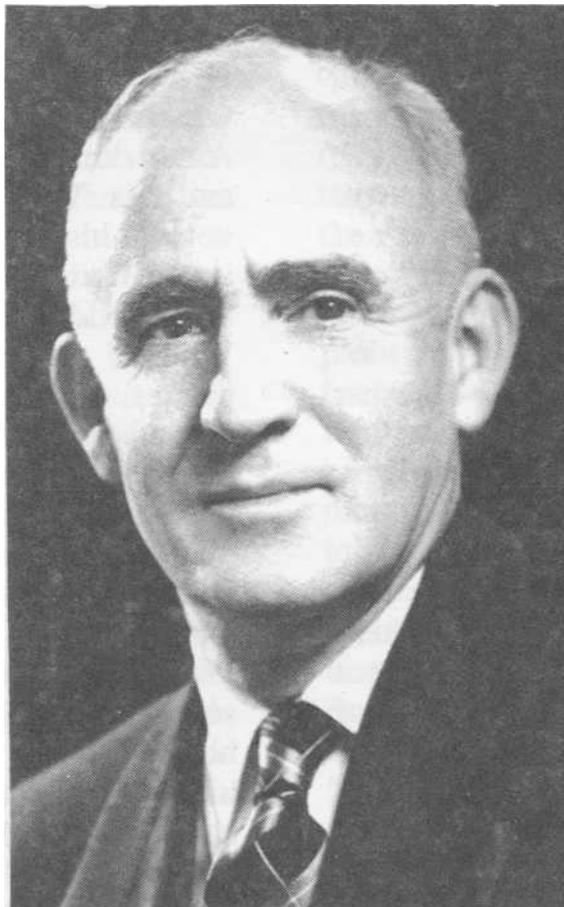
We are met for a brief period of worship to thank God that we have been privileged to have our lives touched profoundly by the life of Bill Utter. No one person is adequate to express for all of us our great feelings of gratitude for him. Since his passing, each of us, I am sure, has expressed to others some of the feelings we have regarding what he has meant to us. I shall try to suggest some of the things he has meant to me, hoping that, in a measure, I speak for all of us. Bill would want this part of the service simple and brief. I shall keep it so.

My remarks naturally will reflect particularly what he meant to my colleagues and to me in the college, but we cannot ignore the meaning of his life to this village. Many of us are convinced that, despite the many changes in the village and the college, we must work at preserving the wonderful town and gown relationships that have been ours historically. Bill Utter did not *work* at this, he simply *lived* it. He loved Granville. He loved the college. He could not conceive of one without the other. His wonderful book, *GRANVILLE, the Story of an Ohio Village*, in every chapter reflects his abiding affection for both. He served both long, unselfishly, enthusiastically..

We had great respect for him. His professional competence as an historian was known not only by his immediate colleagues, but also throughout the profession. His intuitive artistry as a master teacher was a thing of beauty. To sit in his classroom was not simply to take a course in the curriculum. It was to have an experience that former students still recall with delight and appreciation. We had confidence in him. He was not simply a man of high intelligence, but he was a wise man. There is profound difference, and few persons that I have known had the kind of wisdom

in so many different situations that he possessed. There are some of us here who, sensing this rare gift, have sought him out when troubled, seeking the quiet, calm advice that he could give.

We had great respect for him, but it went beyond that. We loved him. Self-effacing, humble, generous, gentle, outgoing, these were his concern and affection for others. Because



he was incapable of pettiness, we could be sure of him. We could trust him always. We loved him for these qualities uniquely possessed by him in super-abundance. We loved him, too, for his impish wit. We would often chuckle and laugh, but more often than not we would wake up later with the realization that his wonderful humor was a subtle way of making a point of significance.

In due course of time his successor for the chair of Alumni Professor of History will be named. But in a larger sense, I think, we all understand that this chair can never be *completely* filled again. He himself carved out its dimensions on such a **qualitative scale—with such a unique** combination of attributes — that his tenure will forever stand apart.

Yes, we had profound respect and great love for him. Our abiding thought at this moment, as we contemplate our loss, is a deep sense of gratitude for his life and what it has meant to us as individuals, to the college, and to the village. May his

unseen presence continue to walk through our memories in college halls and village streets.

Our hearts are filled with our sorrow for his untimely passing. Let us thank God that we had him for so long.

— A. Blair Knapp, *President of Denison University*
This eulogy was a part of the funeral service.)

composed down in its basement in the mid-fifties.

It was there in the basement, amid all his books and papers, that he kept the dictaphone into which he recounted the absorbing story of this "bit of New England transplanted." And in 1987, the Granville Historical Society, which had contributed \$3000 toward the original joint project with Denison, brought out a second printing of Bill's book that is about sold out again!

Bill and Alma Utter--they were indeed "Exemplary Citizens of Granville, 1929-1979"! Would that they could hear our words today!

G. Wallace Chessman
Plaque Dedication
Granville Historical Society Museum
July 18, 1993

I REMEMBER ALMA

Who was it who said, "behind every man whose life and work has made a difference there stands a valiant woman." So it was with William Thomas Utter. The woman who was the stalwart "stand up for your man" person [long before that Tammy Wynette song was popular] was Alma Lucas Utter.

It was my privilege to develop an acquaintance with Alma Utter over a period of 47 years. First contact came in 1941 when an apprehensive young instructor and his wife were

invited to dinner at the home of Professor and Mrs. Utter [definitely not Bill and Alma on that occasion!]. Even with the passage of more than half a century, I can remember the gracious reception extended us by our hostess and the very apparent ambiance of the couple as they made us comfortable and relaxed. After a delicious dinner, we were pleasantly introduced to the flute playing propensities of the professor; the mistress of the household listened a bit less than attentively because her concern was for the comfort of her guests.

Too soon thereafter we were in the war years [World War II, that is. One has to be careful to identify which war. There have been too many.] Mrs. Utter [not yet Alma], wife of his honor, the Mayor of Granville, ministered to young men and often their young woman friends as they confronted the inevitabilities of that time. The Utters opened their home to student renters. I fell into a conversation just a few weeks ago with one such man, full of 45-year-old but still vivid memories of his stay in the Utter home. He expressed gratitude for the mothering and love he had experienced at that time. He was anxious to take a picture of the S. Pearl St. house.

After the war came the exciting years of having her own son at Denison as a "townie." He became a theatre major [perhaps fulfilling his father's unfulfilled ambition]. This meant a constant traipsing to the house on

Pearl Street of her son's extrovertish thespian pals, male and female, perhaps sometimes to the consternation of Alma but mostly, especially when she looked back, mostly to her delight [and Bill's]. And very importantly, one of those traipsing pals turned out to be her devoted daughter-in-law, Dixie Campbell Utter.

And then followed the busy years before and after 1955, the Sesquicentennial Year of the Village. And much involvement including hostessing Governor Frank Lausche himself [since he was a Democrat, that assignment was a pleasant one]. In 1956, the long task of writing *The Story of an Ohio Village* was finished and the first copies were before the eyes of receptive and appreciative readers. This work had been made immeasurably easier for the author by the steadfast encouragement, support, and counsel, and help with research by the author's spouse.

1962, dread year that it was. Alma endured the awful tragedy of the death of beloved husband, best friend, sweetheart, companion, and father of her son. She with courage, steel-will, and resilience entered into widowhood.

Quite soon there came the era when this remarkable woman, at a seemingly inappropriate age, became a professional wage earner. Her many year stint as *Newark Advocate* reporter for Granville affairs was exceptional. During this period, I

served for seven years on the Granville Village Council and I can testify that her attendance at Council meetings was close to perfect. I can see her yet, seated in the reporter's section of the chamber busily taking note of the proceedings. Often her story in the next day's paper surprised me--we had accomplished more than I remembered. And of course she conscientiously covered other affairs of the Village. Her columns were of great service because for most of those years local newspaper coverage did not exist.

My last encounter with Alma [it was Alma by this time] was a happy and satisfying one for both her and me. I had been privileged as President of the Granville Historical Society to arrange for the publishing of a facsimile edition of Professor Utter's 1956 book, *Granville: The Story of an Ohio Village*. The original printing had been sold out for many years and we knew there was continuing demand. Alma and son William were enthusiastic and cooperative. May 31, 1987 was an eventful day. That day, Marian, my wife, and I travelled to Oxford, Ohio, and there in Alma's lovely home, just up the street from her son's home, surrounded by the antique furniture she and Bill had so lovingly restored years before and in front of a portrait of Professor Utter, I presented Alma with the first copy of the facsimile edition. I'll not forget her smile, the twinkle in her eyes, her gracious thanks for our efforts, her obvious great pleasure

that once again readers could enjoy Bill's splendid story telling and grow to love Granville as they had loved it.

I remember Alma!

Prepared with love by
Richard H. Mahard.
First Baptist Church
July 18, 1993

BILL AND ALMA UTTER AND THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF GRANVILLE

On the dust jacket of his sesquicentennial volume, *Granville: The Story of an Ohio Village*, Bill Utter states that he came here in 1929 with:

a wife, Alma Lucas,
a son, William Lucas, aged
three months,
a doctor's degree [Chicago],
five months old,
an understanding that he was
professor of history at
Denison,
and a second-hand Chevrolet.

Bill truly did have a wry sense of humor, didn't he!

Bill and Alma were kind, gentle, rather quiet individuals; they would fit rather well into the life of this New England village.

At the same time, they were perceptive observers who would

make a lasting mark upon their community, Bill Utter as councilman and mayor and eminent historian, and then Alma as a newspaper columnist conveying "the Utter Truth" about this village over a fifteen-year period in the Sixties and Seventies.

Their obituary notices in 1962 and 1988 give us a good summary of their lives and accomplishments. And Blair Knapp's unique tribute captures our affection for Bill Utter in an unforgettable way.

No one seems to remember exactly where the Uppers sat at Sunday morning services--we believe they favored the east side--but they were surely faithful attenders. And Alma served as a deacon as well as president of the Baptist Women's Society, while Bill contributed significantly to our church history by describing religious practice in Granville in the 19th and 20th centuries.

So it is eminently fitting that we remember them both at this worship service this morning, with their son and his family in attendance. And afterwards you may wish to attend the ceremony in their honor outside Granville's distinctive Historical Museum.

Indeed, our church might think about installing its own historic markers, to indicate where our legendary members regularly sat for Sunday service. For as I recall, the Tituses were about where Walter Secor

usually sits, and Blair and Trudi Knapp were exactly where Dave and Joanne Woodyard sit, so perhaps the Utters were just in front of the Schaffs and Mary Kay Campbell.

Ah, what memories we can summon up, here in Granville on a day like this! And for so many good memories of Bill and Alma Utter, we are deeply grateful.

G. Wallace Chessman
First Baptist Church
July 18, 1993



Professor R.H. Mahard presenting the first copy of the new edition of *Granville: The Story of an Ohio Village*, to Mrs. Alma Utter, May, 1987, Oxford, Ohio.

HORACE KING REMEMBERS BILL UTTER

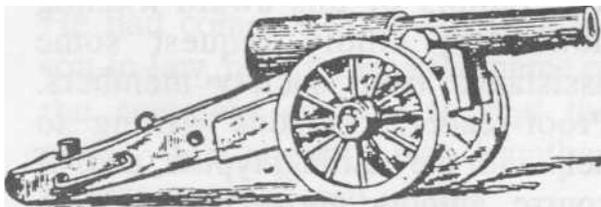
Professor-Emeritus Horace King wrote the following piece to Wally Chessman remembering Bill Utter. We reprint it in this issue as it provides a thoughtful account of Bill Utter the person and describes Professor Utter's work with the museum and the writing of his history of our village.

At the Utter fence dedication, Wally Chessman asked me if I ever had a sherry with Bill Utter. We shared a beer now and then only after Alma pulled down the window shades. She did not object to our beers but she did not want any Granville witnesses to the occasion.

Bill used to tell me about some hilarious encounters with Karl Eschman. At one time, Bill lived at the northeast corner of Thresher and College Streets directly across from Karl. As you may recall, Karl was given to scribble notes. Every now and then he would bring a note to Bill's door. Young Luke, then very small, would answer his knock, and Karl would lean down and say, "Give this to your father." One day Bill answered the door and Karl went through the usual routine. Bill stooped down to receive the note when Karl said "Give this to your father." Then Karl trotted happily back to his house, mission accomplished.

Bill was also a master of the non sequitur. Henry Skipp was a staunch right wing Republican and Bill was a staunch Democrat. Henry would stop Bill on the street and give a long and, he thought, profound dissertation on the virtue of his Republicanism. Bill would listen courteously and then would respond with garbled non sequiturs that would leave Henry completely frustrated.

I spent long hours with Bill working on plans for the museum building. The lower south room of the basement was first to be finished, and Bill would spend mornings talking to the wax cylinder Ediphone from rough notes. He was a master raconteur and he spoke to the Ediphone like an old friend. That is what made his book such easy reading. He often turned the earphone over to me to learn my reaction to his text, not that I ever contributed to his writing. Then Judy Johnson would transcribe his dictation to the typed copy which we would proof read together. This was a precious experience which I will always cherish. Bill was truly a great person.



Civil War Roundtable

The Granville Historical Society's Civil War Roundtable is pleased to announce its schedule for the first half of the 1993-94 academic year.

September 21: Kevin Bennett on the defense of Cincinnati in 1862

October 19: Neal Meier on Civil War military strategies

November 9: Dick Mahard on the fiftieth reunion of Gettysburg veterans

December 14: Ed McCaul on civil war artillery shells

January 18: Discussion of the film, "Gettysburg"

February 15: Discussion of a new book on the Civil War led by Keith Hoover

Meetings are held usually on the third Tuesday of the month at 7:00 pm in the D-Room of the Denison University Physical Education building.

Kevin Bennett gives first Roundtable Presentation

Society member Kevin Bennett presented a thoughtful account of the defense of Cincinnati in 1862. This is often referred to as the time the Squirrel Hunters saved the day! Kevin noted that the Ohio Governor called for able-bodied defenders to assemble in Cincinnati to offer a spirited defense of the Queen City. Many country folk answered this call--and the assembled body is often referred to as a group of "squirrel hunters." Following the war, discharge papers and citations were given for the valiant citizen soldiers who bravely defended Cincinnati. Kevin brought several items referring to the squirrel hunters.

Our thanks to Kevin for once again providing the Roundtable with a marvelous presentation.

OAB Painted

This summer, the Old Academy Building at Main and Elm Streets received a fresh coat of paint. Buck Sargent was in charge of the project. Your Board of Management continually attempts to maintain the historic buildings owned by the society with the care befitting their age and use.

Joint Meeting in October

On October 19, the Roundtable and the Society sponsored a joint meeting in the Old Academy Building. Neal Meier from the Department of History at the Ohio State University discussed war strategies from the perspective of civil war commanders. The role of the rifled musket and its effect on battle casualties served as the focus of Professor Meier's presentation. Over sixty persons attended this presentation.

Annual Banquet in November

The annual banquet for the Society will take place on Monday evening, November 15 at 6:30 in the Education Building of the Presbyterian Church. The theme this year is our Welsh Heritage, with a Welsh dinner. Following the dinner, the Welsh Country Dancers will perform. Make your reservations early. You will receive information directly from the Program Committee. Dues for 1994 will be accepted at the meeting.

Call For Volunteers for The Historical Times

The Editors of this award-winning newsletter kindly request some assistance from society members. Proof-readers, persons willing to help with the mailing, typists, and, of course, authors, are needed. Please call Tony Lisska at 587-0554

Fourth of July Photography Exhibition

Again this summer, Dan Campbell arranged a spell-binding photography exhibition in the Old Academy Building over the Fourth of July holidays. Many photographs from the history of Granville were assembled in a marvelous exhibition. Prominently featured this year were sizable color enlargements of old Granville postcards. Several hundred people visited the exhibition during its run. Our thanks to Dan for his hard work and effort putting together this exhibition for the benefit of the society.

Tom Gallant Publishes Book on Doane Academy

Society Vice-President Tom Gallant recently published a history of Doane Academy, the preparatory school associated with Denison University from its founding in 1831 until its closing in 1927. The narrative is rich in local history and the book contains copies of original materials on the academy, its students and its educational societies. Professor Gallant intends to write a briefer account of this long-lived educational institution for a future issue of **The Historical Times**.

The Old Colony Burying Ground Restoration

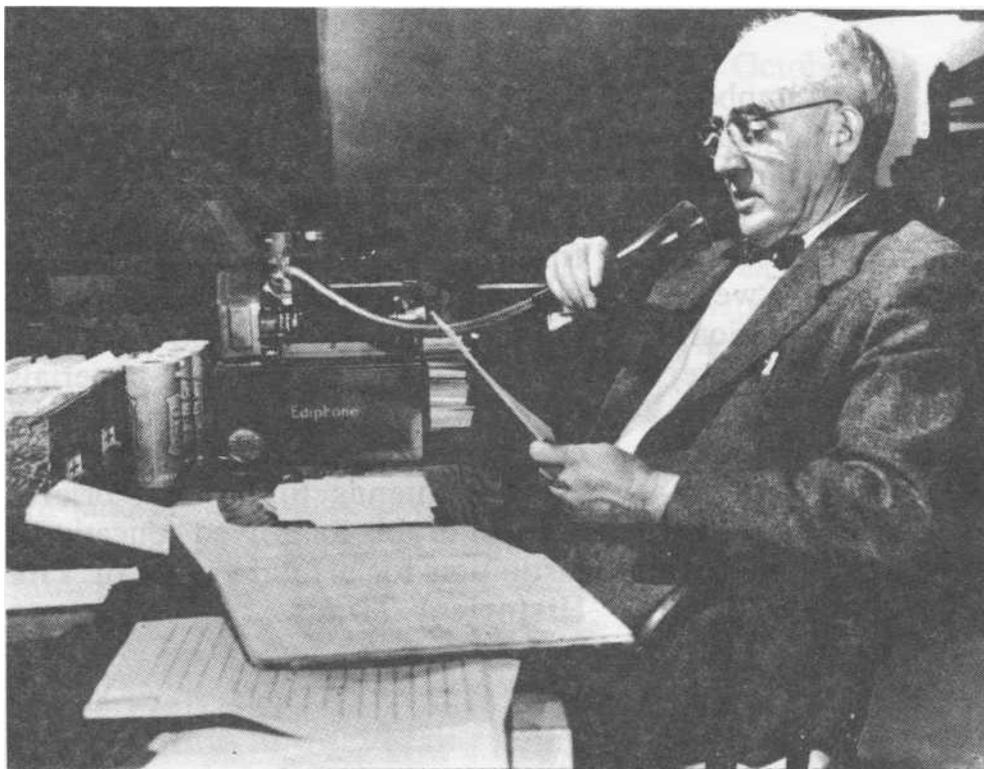
Work continues in the cemetery and the improvement is obvious to anyone who passes by. Most of the leaning stones in the front sections have been re-set and next summer we plan to begin the re-assembly of some of the large monuments composed of several sections.

During a work day in early August an elderly gentleman from Missouri came to the cemetery to look for the grave of his great-grandfather. He had come to Granville with his son-in-law, not knowing the name of the cemetery or how to find the grave. His ancestor was Jonathan Benjamin, a veteran of the

Revolutionary War who died in 1841 at the age of 102; the oldest person buried in the Old Colony.

Both the headstone and the footstone for Jonathan Benjamin were re-set in their original location in the summer of 1992 after being discovered some distance down the hill from the original site. Mr. Findley was overjoyed to find the gravesite of his illustrious ancestor. We were very pleased that the stone was standing erect in its place, and that he happened to come to Granville on a day that we were working in the Old Colony so that we could show it to him.

FROM THE ARCHIVES....



Bill Utter dictating his Granville history.

THE HISTORICAL TIMES is a quarterly publication included with membership in the Granville Historical Society. It is sent to all members.

EDITORIAL BOARD: Maggie Brownfield, Florence Hoffman, Anthony Lisska. Robert Seith.

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