



THE HISTORICAL TIMES

Volume XXII, Issue 1

Winter 2008

Matters of faith

A father and a son and their respective religious journeys

ST. PAUL'S CHURCH--Divine service may be expected, as usual, in St. Paul's Church, on Sunday morning, the 30th instant, at 11 o'clock.

---The Ohio State Journal, November 29, 1851

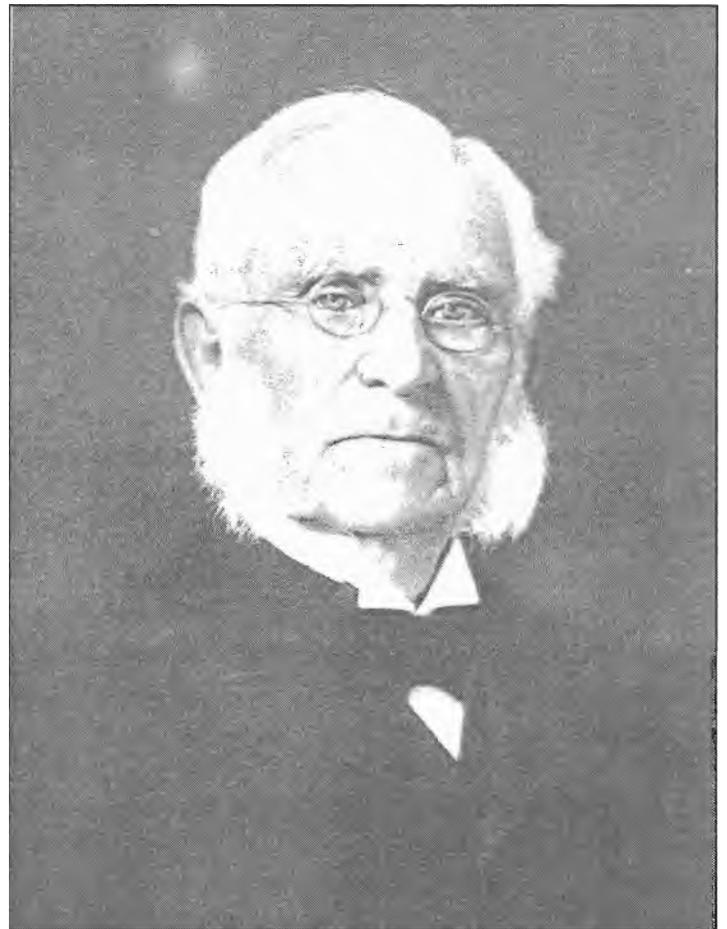
by THERESA OVERHOLSER

To the casual newspaper reader, the announcement above would have seemed straightforward enough. But to the members of the Episcopal church at Third and Mound Streets in Columbus it meant that they would be able to worship as usual, even though their popular, on-again-off-again rector was ill with an infection of the brain, and, even more troubling, was known to be on the brink of becoming Roman Catholic.

The Reverend Henry L. Richards had for several years been studying the tenets of the Roman faith, and as he lay in his sickbed, his life in danger, he berated himself for failing to join what he had come to feel was the true Catholic Church. He well knew that such a move would meet with disapproval and condemnation from friends, parishioners, and, most worrisome, his beloved family.

Henry was perhaps most anxious when he anticipated the reaction of his father. Dr. William S. Richards, in the little village of Granville in Licking County.

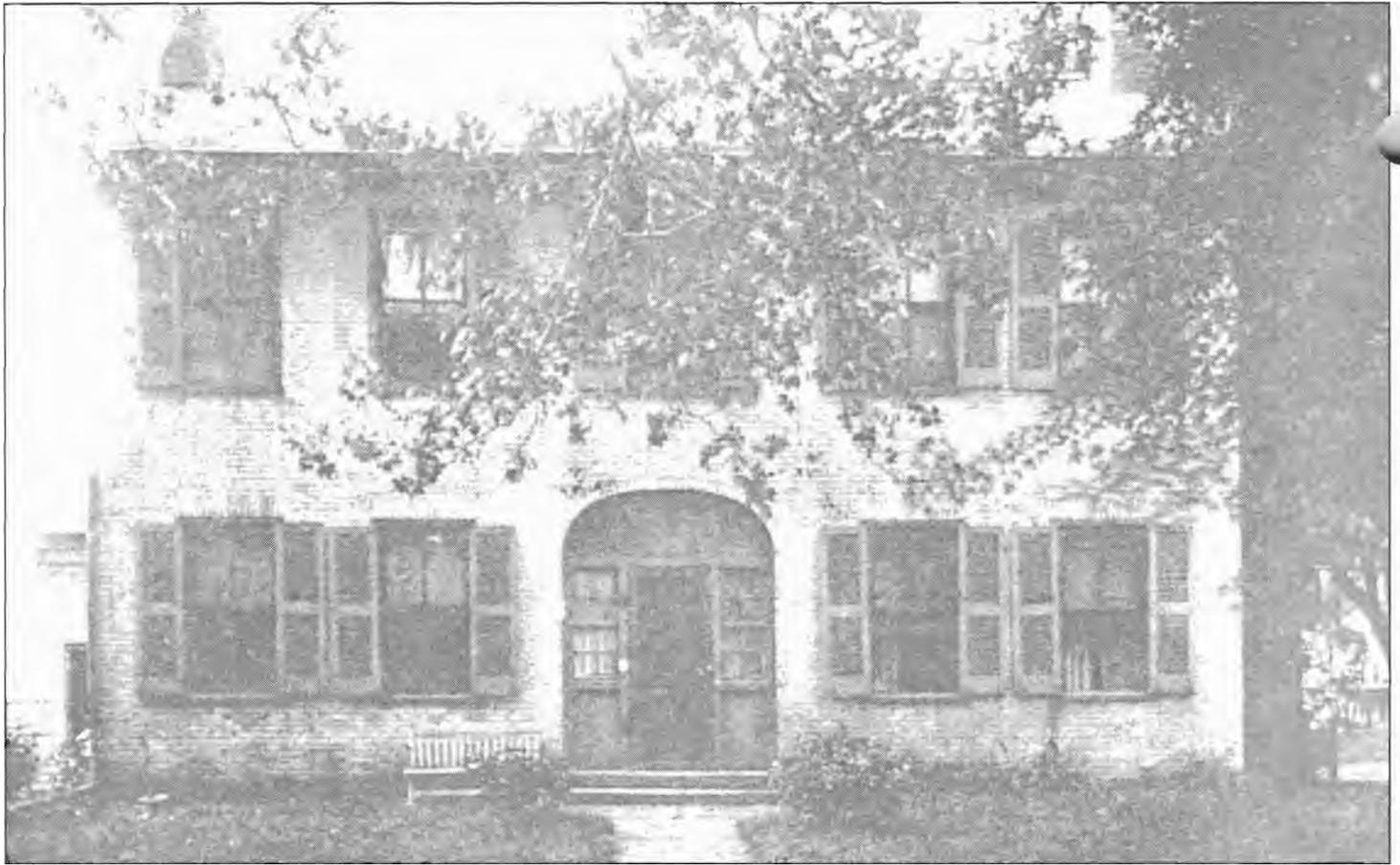
Dr. Richards, of old New England Puritan stock, concerned himself not only with the physical health of his



Rev. Henry Richards

loved ones, but also with their spiritual well-being. Henry knew very well that his father would be beside himself with worry about his oldest child's life as well as his salvation.

Dr. Richards, son of Colonel William Richards, sheriff of New London, Connecticut, had arrived in Granville in 1811, not long after completing his medical studies. The young physician quickly endeared himself to the villagers. He taught school during his first



Workmen laid bricks for the Ahab Jinks home, 124 S. Main St., on a Sunday. The resulting controversy led to divisions among the villagers and within the Congregational Church.

winter in Ohio, while caring for the few injuries and illnesses in the small population. Then on February 26, 1812, an incident occurred that required all of Dr. Richards's compassionate skill.

The farmers of Granville at that time needed an outlet for their excess grain, as well as an income-producing product and a medium of barter. Whiskey, distilled cheaply and locally, was an obvious solution to all three needs. Jacob Goodrich's farm north of town was the site of one of several distilling operations in the area. Unfortunately, the apparatus was somewhat of a "make-do" affair, with a mixture of metal and wooden parts. The tubing was made from hollowed-out elder branches, but the steam-producing vessel was topped by a very heavy metal casting brought from Zanesville. The steam proved too much for the thin wooden tubes, and the whole still exploded during its first firing. Several men were burned and scalded as a result. Dr. Richards tended to these wounded for over a month, earning himself the appreciation and admiration of the entire population.

That same year, a new family settled on a farm just

outside the village to the west, near what is now Wildwood Park. This was the family of Samuel Mower, whose sons would soon become successfully involved in village business enterprises. The eldest daughter, Isabella, caught the eye of William Richards. She was, in William's words, "tall, large and well-proportioned, of a noble and elegant figure. modest and unassuming countenance, easy and graceful in her manners, possessed of a comprehending and well-cultivated mind." They were married in September, 1813 and together had four children: Henry Livingston, born in July 1814; and Mary Ann, William, and Isabella, born in October 1821. Unfortunately, Isabella died just two months after the birth of her daughter of the same name.

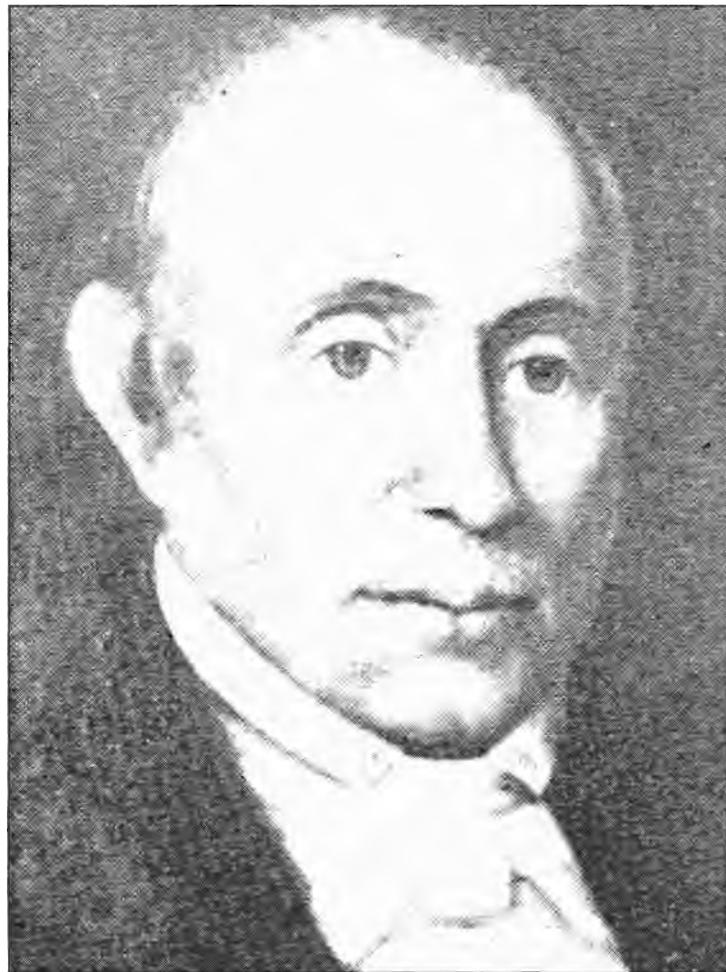
William married for a second time two years later, choosing as his companion Tryphena Bushnell. They had three sons, George, Peter, and Ebenezer. Tryphena was evidently a sweet and gentle step-mother, whom Henry remembered as very pious and firm in her religious beliefs. She ensured that all the Richards children observed the Sabbath from sunset on Saturday to

sunset on Sunday, and studied the catechism and Bible diligently. Dr. William was equally involved with his children, using discipline, example, and teaching to show his loving care for them. Sometimes his lessons were out of the ordinary. Henry recalled one early morning when William awoke the household to look out their windows. It seemed to Henry that "all the stars of heaven were falling and I certainly thought the end of the world had come. It was, indeed, a grand and awful sight and the people might well have been alarmed. Some did actually run out into the street and cry out in the greatest terror. My father had no explanation to give us but as he calmly watched the terrific shower he noticed that as the apparent stars neared the earth they went out and disappeared, and he of course concluded that they could not be real stars but a phenomenon of nature which for the present, at least, was unaccountable." ²

Young Henry attended the village school, a brick building at the foot of the hill at the north end of Main Street. He remembered with pleasure the favorite wintertime activity of his classmates: "Some of the larger boys would get a long plank, draw it up the hill, mount and go like jehu down the hill which was steep enough to give it a tremendous impetus. The fun of it occurred in crossing the road, where we took a great leap into the air and he was a lucky one who succeeded in keeping his seat on landing and holding on till the end of the expedition which occurred on the frozen pond between the Presbyterian and Methodist churches. Those were jolly days."

Henry also had many chores to take up his time. One was the carting of the days water for the household from the town spring on College Street. Another was assisting his father in "letting blood" for his patients. As Henry explained it, blood-letting was practiced not only for the sick, but also as a sort of restorative in the spring for anyone who was feeling a bit run down. Henry's job was to hold the bowl under the patient's arm while his father used the spring-loaded lancet. Often, the stream of blood missed the bowl and spilled onto the floor, requiring Henry' to be clean-up crew as well.

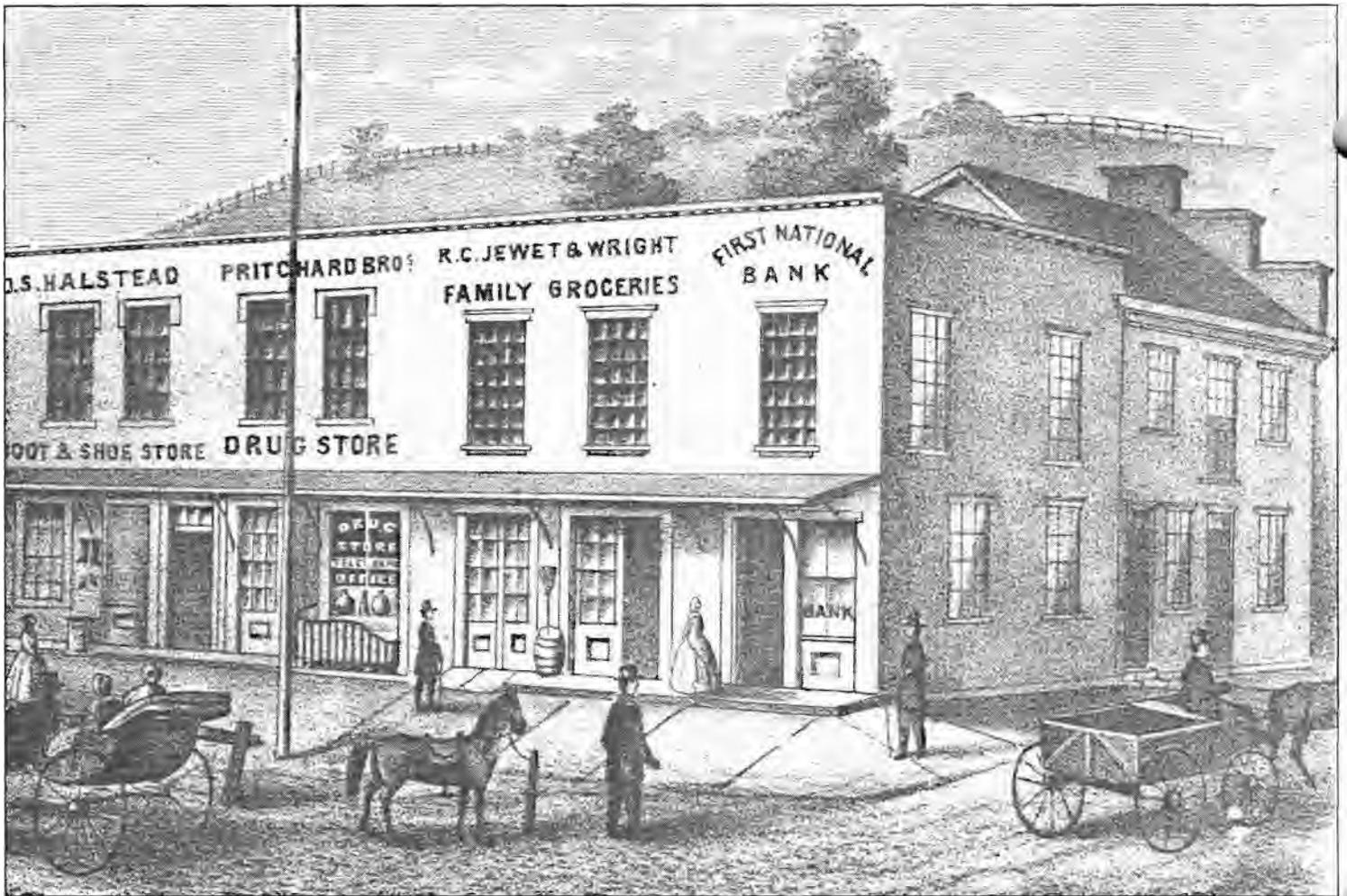
Many of Henry's vivid recollections centered around the family's religious life. Like most village families, they attended lengthy Sunday services in the Congregational church. He described sitting in the pew in the old unheated building in winter, shivering and wishing for the sermon to end. He recalled that in



Dr. William Richards

—*Courtesy St. Luke's Episcopal Church*

its plainness it was a place to worship without distraction. When Henry was a teenager, the Congregational community was split into factions when their pastor, Ahab Jinks, allowed workmen, led by Henry's uncle, Lucius Mower, to lay bricks for Jinks's own house on a Sunday morning. Some say that it was because it was almost too late in the year for mortar to be effective. Henry wrote that it was because the workmen needed to go on quickly to another job. Whatever the reason, Jinks declared that the work was a necessary breaking of the Sabbath, causing immediate, heated controversy. A minority of the congregation asked Jinks to resign, which he refused to do, resulting in a schism that **produced two Presbyterian and one Congregational church**. Eventually, one of the Presbyterian groups, led by Dr. Richards and several other influential men of the town, gathered into an Episcopal congregation, with Dr. Richards as Senior Warden. Dr. Richards was said to have taken this step in part to provide a church that worldly business leaders such as the Mower brothers, Alfred Avery, and



Henry Richards clerked at the Mower Brothers' store, which occupied this building, still standing at the north west corner of Prospect and Broadway.

Anthony Prichard would feel comfortable attending together, rather than not attending at all.

Young Henry stayed within the Congregational (later Presbyterian) fold, where he attended services and Sunday School without much enthusiasm, all the while desiring the intense conversion experience that many of his friends were having at that time. After months of longing, the change in his spirit came about, not with a great emotional upheaval, but quietly and peacefully during a Sunday service. He became what he called "a man of prayer," a professing Christian. In his old age, he remembered vividly his official examination by Reverend Jacob Little, and the question put to him that day. "Well now, Brother Richards, suppose it were revealed to you that it was God's will that you were to be damned, do you think you would be willing to submit to the will of God?" I dared not say no for I knew what was expected of me. I could not say yes to such an awful question, so I simply mumbled out rather incoherently that I hoped so, or something to that effect." ⁴

Once Henry joined the church, he became a zealous member, leading prayers, teaching Sunday School, singing in the choir, attending Bible class, and practicing total abstinence from alcohol. In fact, this latter habit helped set him on the road to the Episcopal priesthood. He had been clerking in the general store owned by his Mower uncles, where he routinely avoided selling liquor, resorting to all kinds of excuses and dodges when customers asked for it. Finally the uncles asked Henry to either make the sales or leave the store. Although they soon asked him to return on his own terms, Henry had already decided that he had a religious vocation and must be about the business of preparing for seminary.

He was fortunate that in the small town of Granville there was already a college he could attend. Although it was affiliated with the Baptist Church, the Granville Literary and Theological Institute (now Denison University) made a good starting point for his preparatory studies. He attended for two years, then left home to go to Kenyon College, an Episcopal school in

Gambier. near Mt. Vernon. Ohio, where three years before he had spent one rather lackluster year. This time, a few years older and with a goal in mind, Henry graduated at the top of his class.

While in Gambier. he took part in the religious societies, devotional meetings, and acts of zeal expected of the students. taking special pleasure in one, the teaching of Sunday School in the area. The Sunday Schools were held in homes and public school buildings, often log buildings with puncheon floors and barely-working chimneys. - Summer and winter we went regularly, faithfully and punctually to our work. Cold or hot. wet or dry. blow high, blow low, under the burning sun of summer, and the piercing blasts of winter, through snow and slush and sleet, we trudged our four, five and six miles, to impart instruction to these poor children and to preach to these. in many instances, benighted souls."⁵

After graduating with a Bachelor of Arts degree, Henry decided to take a year's break before beginning theological studies. He spent some time traveling in the East, to Baltimore. Philadelphia, and New York. He even was able to take the partly completed Baltimore and Ohio railroad for a few miles in Maryland. He remembered the near terror some of his fellow travelers felt when they first saw the steaming engine. Upon his return home he was employed at the Granville Female Seminary teaching vocal music. One of his students, best friend of his sister Isabella, was Cynthia Cowles of Worthington, Ohio. Cynthia's "bright eyes had begun, he confesses, to shed upon his heart a mild, sweet radiance as attractive as it was dangerous to his peace of mind."⁶ The attraction and then gentle courtship continued through the winter and spring, until Cynthia returned to Worthington at the end of the term. Henry proposed to her by letter soon after, and her eventual acceptance spurred him on to his final years at Kenyon.

Theological studies and lay reading of his own sermons in various parishes took up the time until ordination. Also, Henry joined into many discussions of fundamental questions and doctrinal fine points among his fellows. He was an excellent student, devout and zealous, and so was permitted to be ordained after a shorter-than-usual time. In the spring of 1842 Henry Livingston Richards was ordained by Bishop McIlvaine at St. Luke's Church in Granville. He and
I held the first formal service in the new Columbus

parish of St. Paul. There were 21 communicants and 50 Sunday School scholars. The building was only a roofed-over basement.

Reverend Richards was a popular young rector; he was pious and sincere in his loving care for all, and was an ardent and persuasive speaker. Like his father, he concerned himself with both the moral and the physical welfare of his neighbors. In the course of his pastoral duties, he often came into contact with the German Catholics of the south side neighborhood. He was somewhat surprised to find that even their young children were well-versed in the Catholic catechism, and were not able to be induced to attend Episcopal church services.

It was during these early years in Columbus that Henry's faith began to change. He read various Anglican publications that discussed the movement of many prominent thinkers in Britain toward the Roman Catholic church. He found himself writing sermons on subjects which echoed the Catholic teaching about the sacraments as a means of grace. He unnecessarily worried that his own baptism as an infant had not been sufficient, so had himself rebaptized by Bishop Whittingham during a convention in Philadelphia. Yet he remained persistent in his loyalty to the Episcopal church.

One incident suggests that perhaps Henry's Roman leanings were becoming apparent. The brick gothic church building was finally completed in 1845, and the parishioners awaited its consecration by Bishop McIlvaine. Unfortunately the architect, in keeping with the rest of the design, had included an altar table featuring a marble slab top and side panels with gothic arches. McIlvaine, who, it was said, "was most keen sighted in detecting tendencies to Rome,"⁷ sent a letter in which he refused the consecration unless the altar were removed and a good honest table substituted. The church vestry met and passed a resolution stating in essence that even though they doubted the importance of the altar's design, they would follow the Bishop's demand. However, instead of substituting a table, the gothic side panels were sawed out, and the corners finished to look like pillars. The building was duly consecrated in August of 1846.

Life for Henry and Cynthia and their growing family might have gone on satisfactorily in Columbus except for one problem. Since he was a young man Henry had been subject to severe bouts of indigestion, which became worse when he was most studious and better

when he was active, especially when he traveled. A calling such as his meant many hours of thoughtful study and writing, so the problem persisted and strengthened. On April 24, 1848, Henry officially resigned the charge of the parish. Unsure of what his next path should be, he embarked on a trip to New Orleans, undertaking several business errands for friends. He had some thought of settling in the South with his family and so observed the countryside and people with interest.

After arriving in New Orleans, Reverend Richards met several of his fellow Episcopal priests and preached in their churches. And yet he still was anxious to learn more about the Roman Catholic church. Almost by accident he found a Catholic bookshop where the owner allowed him to borrow any material that interested him. The first book which he read was a catechism. The clearly presented statements of doctrine made a strong impression on him. He began attending mass on Sunday after preaching at an Episcopal service. He was surprised and pleased to see that rich and poor, master and slave, worshiped with equal devotion in the same congregation. He described his feelings on seeing in practice what he had been trying to accomplish in his own parish: "But here in the Catholic Church (it was the same in all their churches) was the realization of all that I had hoped and longed for, but never yet found. It made a great impression upon me. I felt that that was the place for me, that there I would like to be. It was entirely in accordance with my ideas of the true spirit of Christianity, and I was conscious of a strong impulse to cast in my lot amongst them." ⁸

Yet when Henry returned to Columbus it was to a series of secular jobs, such as selling insurance and collecting bills for a large company. His former parishioners asked him frequently to preach for them on Sundays and to officiate at weddings and funerals, which he was happy to do. For two years after his trip South, he hesitated to take the final step of breaking with the Episcopal church, even though his leanings had become apparent. Then in November of 1851 he was struck by near-fatal illness followed by a long time of convalescence.

During those weeks in bed, Henry was finally able to realize that he was certain about his conversion. He begged his family to send for a priest, but they hesitated. Cynthia decided that if he appeared to truly be dying, she would do as he asked, yet she hoped that as

he got better his anxiety would subside.

News of his intentions began to circulate in the parish and the rest of the city. Rumors followed closely: his conversion was the result of his brain fever; he was about to separate from his wife to become a priest; Cynthia would be put in a convent. The local newspapers even joined in the attacks. But by now Henry was determined. In January 1852 he wrote to both Bishop McIlvaine and his own father informing them of the final step he was about to take. Both of these men reacted with pain and regret.

Dr. Richards expressed his grief in his diary: "Besides the death of my wife and son [Rev. George Richards of Ashtabula, Ohio] I have lost two grandchildren within the year, & my oldest son has been dangerously sick so that his wife and friends around him strongly feared he could not recover; & now that he has regained his health I am greatly grieved & mortified to hear that he has come to the determination to leave the P.E. Church & join the Roman Catholic. This will be to me a matter of grief & lamentation for time to come. Yet I know that God in his good Providence can lead him to see his errors & bring him back to the simple truth of the Gospel, and hope that I may never cease to pray that this may be done." On January 25, 1852, Henry was received into the Catholic Church.

Mr. and Mrs. Richards began to plan almost immediately to move away from Columbus, where life had become anything but congenial. A relative offered Henry a job in New York City, which he accepted. Cynthia and their four children were entrusted to Dr. Richards in Granville, where they arrived at the end of March. Sadly, just a month later, in early May, Dr. William Richards fell from a window in his barn onto some stones below. He lingered for four days before dying from his injuries. He had been an important citizen of Granville for 41 years, and his accomplishments were notable. In addition to caring for the sick and injured with great skill and compassion, he had helped establish St. Luke's Episcopal Church and was instrumental in beginning the Granville Episcopal Female Seminary. He had opened his home to many others, including his sister-in-law, his widowed mother, students at the Female Seminary, and Henry's wife and children. He was held in high esteem by all who were touched by his ability and kindness. His funeral procession was the largest ever seen in Granville unties, that time.



SHS 611 West From Erasby Church Spike

A view of West Broadway: The light-colored house with the dormer in the left center of the photo was the Richards home. The house was originally on the northwest corner of Broadway and Mulberry, but was moved across Mulberry and remodeled extensively in the 1860s.

Henry continued on to New York alone. A series of jobs in the city followed, including clerking and sales. Finally a permanent position permitted him to send for his family, and after nearly three years apart they took up residence in Jersey City. All the while, Henry remained cheerfully confident that God would provide whatever was needed. Not long afterward, Cynthia too was baptized and joined her husband in the practice of their new faith. The children likewise joined the Church, to their father's everlasting joy.

The new Catholic man was as zealous and pious as he had been in his "old" life. He continued to teach Sunday School, and was a leader in the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. He helped to bring the Sisters of the Poor of St. Francis to New Jersey to minister to the needy and sick. He carried on with these good works when his company promoted him and transferred him to their Boston office. Eventually, he took the job of Visitor to the Poor for the Board of Charities of the City of Boston. For 23 years he used this post to see to the physical and spiritual well-being of the city's lowest inhabitants.

The final years of Henry's long life were filled by his

writing for many publications, including the Sacred Heart Review and the Catholic Columbian. He contributed a summer-long series of letters to The Granville Times, in which he told charmingly of the town's and his own early days.

Henry died on November 8, 1903. He was ministered to on his deathbed by his own son Joseph Havens Richards, a Jesuit priest and former president of Georgetown University. At Henry's request, there were no flowers at his funeral, only a palm leaf on his coffin. Nearing the end of his life, and perhaps with his father in mind, Henry wrote: "My race is nearly run. Time hastens on whither we will or not. The longest life is too short unless its greatest purpose be fulfilled. He only can be called a truly wise traveler who makes it the great business of his life to seek the paths of rectitude and duty which lead eventually to the land of eternal peace and blessedness in the world to come." I .

Author's note: I adapted this piece from my article in the January 2008 issue of Barquilla de la Santa Maria, the Bulletin of the Catholic Record Society-Diocese of Columbus.

FOOTNOTES, NEXT PAGE

From the President's Pen

While The Historical Times naturally has its focus on Granville's past, I want to use this space to highlight developments that promise much for the future of the Society and the museum community in Granville.

Since last September when the boards of the Granville Historical Society and the Robbins Hunter Museum met to become better acquainted and to brainstorm ways in which we might work productively together, a culture of cooperation has begun to take root in this community.

Since January, I have met regularly with Ann Lowder, Natalie Marsh, and Theresa Overholser representing respectively the Robbins Hunter Museum, the Denison Museum, and the Granville Life-Style Museum. The initial results of these conversations will soon be visible.

On the evening May 15 you can be part of a Granville "museum hop" as the Granville Historical Society, Robbins Hunter Museum, and Denison Museum jointly open an exhibit of original posters from World Wars I and II. "Art for War's

Sake: The Granville Experience" features over 100 original posters drawn from local collections and exhibited at all three venues. An accompanying lecture series runs from May to October.

Then on June 9 the "Granville Museum Consortium" will initiate a joint docent education program presenting current and future docents a diverse and eclectic array of enrichment opportunities. Meeting every other Monday during the coming year, participants will have access to educational programs led by local and regional experts and university professors on such topics as Granville history, special touring exhibitions of contemporary Korean ceramics, Victorian culture, and Greek Revival architecture.

I hope many of our current docents and as well as new volunteers will choose to avail themselves of this stimulating program.

*Don Schilling,
President,*

The Granville Historical Society

Matters of faith

(Continued from P. 7)

1 *Letter of William S. Richards to his sisters, March 29, 1813, Ohio Historical Society Archives*

2 *The Granville Times, May 30, 1901*

3 *The Granville Times, April 22, 1901*

4 *The Granville Times, May 16, 1901*

5 *Richards, J. Havens, Si., A Loyal Life, B. Herder, St. Louis, 1913, p.75*

6 *Op. cit., p.81*

7 *Op. cit., p.185*

8 *Op. cit., p.213*

9 *Diary of William S. Richards, 1852, Ohio Historical Society Archives*

10 *The Granville Times, August 15, 1901*



THE HISTORICAL TIMES

Celebrating its 21st year of publication by
The Granville Historical Society

Editorial Board

Louis Middleman, Board of Managers member
Anthony Lisska, Professor, Denison University

Designer

Charles A. Peterson

Printing by:

Denison University Department of
Office Services

Board of Trustees

President - Don Schilling
Vice President - Tom Martin
Secretary - Charles A. Peterson
Treasurer - Alex Galbraith

Class of 2008

Florence Hoffman
Lance Clarke
Anne Aubourg

Class of 2009

Cynthia Con
Carla Beckerley

Class of 2010

Maggie Brooks
Louis Middleman
Theresa Overholser

Docent Coordinator and Office Manager
Jodi Weaver Chiles

Address comments, suggestions or queries
to:

The Granville Historical Society
P.O. Box 129, Granville, OH 43023

office@granvillehistory.org

740.587.3951

The Historical Times is published quarterly

Museums operated by the
Granville Historical Society:

Granville Museum
115 E. Broadway
Old Academy Building,
corner West Elm Street and
East Main Street