

# THE HISTORICAL TIMES

*Newsletter of the Granville, Ohio, Historical Society*

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## Clara Sinnett White 1862-1947

The people who settled Granville thought themselves special, beyond the uniqueness of individuals; favored and special in spirit, establishing a settlement on the frontier. Never mind that frontier and special are flexible words, that Newark and Worthington preceded these settlers. Their instinct was prescient, ratified by succeeding generations of the occupants of this community, and if not wholly accepted, is alive in the border real estate development advertising which trumpets "Granville Schools!"

Most communities have their advocates, even boosters. Granville, too, had people who desired it to grow, to be the county seat, to be a major industrial center. Others wanted something more limited and bucolic. Perhaps both would have realized their wish as this "charming" village goes about "expanding" into its third century.

Along the way, there were people who simply acted on their view of this special place, sometimes with absorbed concentration on their forebears, sometimes with unselfconscious acuity. Jacob Little (1823-1876) labored for public rectitude and sobriety. Henry Bushnell (1823 -

1905) gave Granville a sense of historical place. Druggist Charles W. Bryant (1849-1886) died of typhoid just before the water system he helped put in place was on-line. Clara Sinnett White (1862-1947), through her generosity, left the Granville Public Library and the Granville Historical Society buildings in place for all to use and enjoy. Mr. Bryant is the founder of the Granville Historical Society, and Mrs. White can be described as its muse and inspiration.



*Clara Sinnett White*

Clara Sinnett was the sole survivor of the four children of Dr. Edwin Sinnett and Sarah Wright Sinnett (the granddaughter of Spencer Wright). Mr. Wright built the house and tannery on Newark-Granville Road just east of Clear Run occupied for many years by Minnie Hite Moody. The Sinnett's house was on the current site of the Granville Public Library and now stands behind that building. Clara Sinnett (White) moved her childhood home to the back of the lot so that the Library Fund Raising Committee, of which she was chair, could have the Library building built in 1924-5, providing the south view we now see from Broadway. "Sinnett House" has been rented by the Library Board to

the Granville Fellowship since the Fellowship's formation in 1960 under the leadership of Helen Dunfield and Mike Piper.

Clara Sinnett was educated in the local schools and the Granville Female College (GFC) before studying music and piano at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston; there her musical perspective was influenced by Rosa and Abbie Kerr. Following a trip to Europe, she returned to Granville where Rosa Kerr was now an instructor at the GFC. Clara Sinnett herself became an instructor in piano at the GFC in 1894 when Miss Kerr left the College. Clara Sinnett married Professor Charles Browne White in 1900, and began to assume a major role in the cultural life of Granville from their large stone house that for many years dominated Mt. Parnassus.

Mrs. White's place in Granville was the subject of many articles by Minnie Hite Moody in a regular *Newark Advocate* column "I Remember, I Remember" over the period 1964-1976. From her young adulthood, having grown up in Granville, Mrs. Moody continued to address Mrs. White as "Miss Clara" and her husband as "Mr. Charlie." From the column of 25 January 1969 Mrs. Moody wrote:

It was not, as originally planned, the idea of Mrs. Charles Browne White to establish the Granville Museum in the stone building, built in 1815, as the combined bank and library of the Alexandrian Society. Over the years she had had all sorts of plans toward an eventual museum for the Granville Historical Society.

Artifacts from Granville houses and farms accumulated in barns and other houses as households were broken up. These possessions, enthusiastically collected by Charles Webster Bryant, Francis W. Shepardson and many others, were moved from one storage place to another as years went by. Clara Sinnett and Charles Wright took a special interest in these collections and began to consolidate them on their own property.

Soon, they found they needed more storage, and began to amass their collection in unused buildings along Newark-Granville Road; an old grist mill, the tannery, and the Norton Case house — for years used as the Granville Golf Course club house [cf. *The Historical Times* Spring 1999] - property which the Whites owned. Many of these structures were not substantial, were subject to fire, rodents, weather and began to be razed as unsafe. With a sense of desperation about preserving these historic possessions, Mrs. White purchased the Mower house (at 233 East Broadway), and began to store the antiquities in a real house. Mrs. Moody continues:

Her thoughts ran along the lines that if she were widowed it might be impossible for her to remain in the stone house on Mt. Parnassus, and at this distant day she might choose to move down into the village. Then when she died she would will the Mower house to the village, or to the Historical Society for use as a museum.

It did not turn out that way, quite.

Professor White died 20 March 1945. In 1946, Mr. & Mrs. Augustus Hiesey offered to purchase the house from Mrs. White and suggested that their purchase monies be presented to the Historical Society, though her, for a museum. Clara Sinnett White knew that she, too, was in failing health at that time and would not likely be able to make the Mower house suitable for the prospect of a restricted way of life. She also wanted to allow a young family to enjoy and love the house.

Accordingly, the accumulation of furniture, books, papers, ox-yokes, horse-shoes, kitchen utensils, and "heaven knows what" were moved again, this time to the Sinnett house at the southwest corner of East College and North Prospect [the white-painted brick house at 135 East College St. now owned by the Granville Fire Department]. Mrs. White died 31 July 1947. Mrs. Moody says:

Over and over, I write about Mrs. Charles Browne White when naturally an entire generation has grown up without knowing much more about her than that she lived in the stone house on Mt. Parnassus — if they know that. And of course hundreds of newcomers now make their home in Granville and Licking County and no doubt wonder why I bother to write about her, and her husband. Clara White was a great granddaughter of John Sinnett, Justin Hillyer and Lt. Jesse Munson, all of the original Granville Colony that came to Ohio from the Connecticut River Valley (*sic*) in 1805. Miss Clara may have been a bit snooty — and she had every right to be. She was

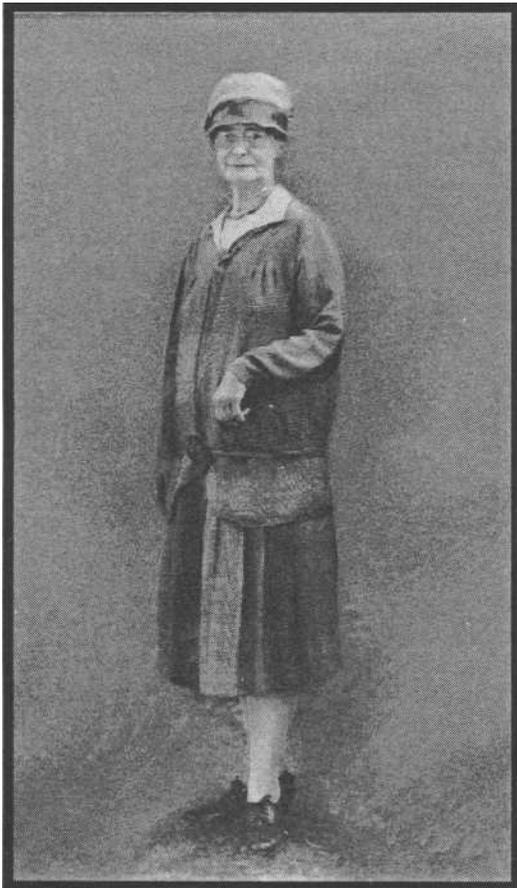
a person of utmost faith, her heart was in the right place, and although she did not possess what might be called the common touch, she did what she could with style and largesse. She lived with Mr. Charlie close to nature, engrossed in their flowers, birds, orchards, and the landscape.

Mrs. Moody's description can be discerned in this unattributable doggerel from the Historical Society Archives:

Turn backward, turn backward  
 Oh, Time in thy flight,  
 And give us a Granville  
 To please Mrs. White.

With her sense of history and obligation, Mrs. White provided for the renovation of the old stone "bank building/library/canal office/restaurant" on the south side of Broadway into a museum for the Granville Historical Society. The building stands just east of St Luke's Episcopal Church on the south side of Broadway. Although she did not live to see the building's recovery and new life, it was ready for the Granville Sesquicentennial in 1955. In *Granville; The Story of an Ohio Village*, William Utter says, "Seventy years after the incorporation of the Society, its possessions at last found a safe repository in the (new) Historical Museum."

Clara Sinnett moved from teaching piano at the GFC to a wider interest in music bringing the community with her. She was for many years organist at the Presbyterian Church. Her trips to New York for opera and other musical events created much local excitement, reported repeatedly in the local papers. She annually "herded" groups of children to the Opera House stage to sing Christmas carols in English, Italian and German. She was a command performance at club gatherings throughout Licking County. She felt it her duty to enrich the village in a cultural way. "Granville has a heritage," she was fond of saying. "It must never be allowed to



Clara Sinnett White in the 1920's

become ordinary."

At this remove, how could one disagree with *The Granville Times* of 23 December 1915, reporting on one of her lectures before the Newark Women's Club that

Mrs. White treated the subject with the thoroughness and finish which characterizes all her work. (She) demonstrates the ways of expressing emotion by means of various musical instruments.

No, no Leonard Bernstein or Vaughn Williams, she, but we recognize her interpretive idea, which these composers expressed again in our own time.

What we note is Clara Sinnett White's dedication to the common weal, however idiosyncratically expressed. In that expression we recognize the uniqueness each of us bring to making Granville what it is, and, what we expect it to be. And, Granville had, and has, its share of such people beyond Rev. Little, Mr. Bushnell, Mr. Bryant, and Mrs. White: Tom Jones (sculptor/painter), Richard Dean (classical scholar), Samson Talbot (educator/college president), Kirtley Mather (geologist/Baptist layman), and in our own time, Buck Sargent (grocer/fireman), Richard Mahard (geographer/councilman) Paul Bennett (poet/gardener). Nor do we forget the formal chroniclers of Granville and Denison history, William T. Utter and G. Wallace Chessman.

Clara Sinnett White gave Granville the legacy of her spirited civic mindedness, and, because she was financially able to, left buildings that help define the village. We are all much in her debt. No doubt, with her directness and style, she would urge all of us to find ways to - contribute! - to the life of this special place.

<sup>1</sup> Parody of a verse "Rock Me To Sleep" by Elizabeth Aker Allen (1832-1911).  
*William Hoffman*

## Cabinet Making

The subscriber takes this method to inform his friends, and the public in general, that he has commenced the

CABINET MAKING BUSINESS in the Stone Building formerly occupied for a Bank House; and from his experience in the business, flatters himself to be able to give satisfaction to such as may call on him for any articles in his line. He will receive in payment most articles of country produce, and will not refuse cash.

Granville. Jan 14<sup>th</sup> 1823 SAM F. BACON

Wanted immediately, seasoned Cherry, Walnut, and Butternut Boards, and Scantling, for which a liberal price will be given. S. F. B.

*From The Wanderer January 24, 1823  
An early business in our Museum building*

## Editorial Board For The Historical Times

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## This is the Sixteenth Year of Publication for The Historical Times

Send comments, suggestions, or queries to:

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# THE GRANVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Leora Norris Shepardson

July 1955

*The following account of the organization, holdings, location, and movements of the Historical Society by Mrs. John E. Shepardson was presented at the time of the celebration of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Licking Company's settlement in Granville. It is in the Society's records in typescript, and, as far as is known, was not formally published.*

Through the past seventy years different groups of interested officers and members of the Granville Historical Society have met only to organize and re-organize, and, to lament the fact that they had no permanent building to display their precious possessions. These include the collection of historical documents and objects relating to the history of Granville, Ohio and Granville Township.

The first Granville Historical Society was duly incorporated under the laws of Ohio, and a Charter was granted March 12, 1885. Charter members were, - Charles Webster Bryant, Francis Wayland Shepardson (President), Crayton Wilson Black, John Henderson Sample, George Gordon Kyle, DeEsting W. Jones, Edward Joseph Olney, George C. Case, Walter Lowrie Hewey, Frank Rodolphus Morse. C.W. Bryant was Chairman of the 3-member Executive Committee.

Charles Webster Bryant came to Granville in 1866 and Francis Shepardson in 1868. Both had a remarkable penchant for genealogical studies, and were deeply interested in the exceptional conditions under which the Granville Colony was founded. The Colony's pioneer adventures also fascinated them, and each devoted his leisure to the collecting and recording of historical data concerning Granville.

Thus, Charles and Frank became the co-founders of that first Historical Society in

Granville. The untimely death of Charles Bryant August 31, 1886 at the age of 37 was an irreparable loss to Granville and to the Historical Society which had only been chartered the previous year.



*"Old Frame"*

Four years later Francis Shepardson entered Yale University and went on to a teaching position at the University of Chicago, leaving the Granville Historical Society deprived of its most interested and helpful members.

Consequently, the Society folded up and their possessions were stored in a frame structure that had been moved to the Denison Campus in 1855. The building was erected to

*The Perry Building*



accommodate students in the Granville Literary and Theological Institution on its original site



*Prior Building*

on Columbus Road. On the newly named **D e n i s o n Campus** it served many **purposes**, including being used as a **gymnasium**, and stood where the Chemistry Building now stands (*ed. note:* called Chemistry Cottage 1925-1966 and now the location of Herrick Hall).

That building was razed in 1905, so rooms were acquired in *the Perry Building* for a short time but they were soon needed for other purposes. The possessions were again moved to the *Prior Building* for a short period until it was sold.

According to Henry Bushnell ("The History of Granville" Hain & Adair Columbus 1889) it was Bryant's intention to publish as part of his History of Granville, Ohio a genealogical record of the pioneer families of Granville, but his finished work could not be found. Bryant, however, had kept a copy of all his letters in his pursuit of historical data.

This mass of data was carefully guarded by Mrs. Lorinda Bryant, his widow. When Mrs. Bryant joined the faculty of Ogontz College in Pennsylvania she took the material with her.



*Grover House*

She later moved to Deposit, New York, and from there on to New York City. After her death in 1933, her son Fitch Bryant

sent it to the Granville Historical Society.

The Granville Historical Society was re-organized August 2, 1905 prior to the Centennial anniversary. This organization succeeded the one begun in 1885, whose invaluable researches, investigations, memoirs, and collections formed the nucleus of the possessions of the Society in 1905. Space does not permit a listing of these possessions but one is amazed, glancing over the early issues of *The Granville Times*, at the vast amount of historical material collected.

At the close of the business affairs of the Centennial, \$572.61 was turned over to the Historical Society. \$500.00 was placed on interest, and of the rest, \$38.00 was paid for



*Home of Mr. & Mrs. Charles B. White*

storage, and \$34.61 placed in the local treasury. For two years after the 1905 Centennial, the event was commemorated by giving historical programs.

Subsequently the possessions were moved to the home of Miss Mary Wilson on Lancaster Road, who offered a room and supervision for \$24 a year. This sum was met by the interest on the \$500. At her death, in 1937, the possessions were again moved, part to the *Grover House* on Broadway and the rest to the *home of Mr. & Mrs. Charles B. White on Mt. Parnassus*, all under the supervision of Mrs. White.

Thanks are due Mr. Charles B. White for reading over this historical material (*ed. note:* the material was now in his house) and writing hundreds of articles which appeared in *The Granville Times* and *The Newark Advocate*. (*ed. note:* see also "The Philosopher of Mt. Parnassus" Denison University Press 1948) For the one hundred and twenty-fifth celebration in 1930, Mr. Fitch Bryant sent other historical relics and many were displayed during the celebration.

In 1941, a score of interested residents met to formulate plans to carry on the work of the Society, only to again disband [because of World War H] and because, as always, the historical collection was not generally available.

According to the will of Mrs. Charles B. White, the residuary of her estate in 1948 was left to the Granville Historical Society amounting to \$89,816. After the sale of her home, again, and for the last time in seventy years, the possessions of the Historical Society were stored in the upper story of the garage belonging to Mr. Louis A. Reeder.

On December 30, 1948 a committee consisting of Dr. W.T. Utter, Donald Young, and Joseph Rodes was appointed and authorized to purchase from the Granville Library Board, "the little stone Alexandria Bank building" for \$12,000. This building had been built in 1815 with the first stone quarried from Prospect Hill where Denison's Whisler Hospital now stands. The Granville Historical Society was again re-organized and plans were made to purchase property on Broadway for a Museum.

At its November 22, 1954 meeting, the Village Council requested the Society to instigate the proceedings for the organization that would put on the Sesquicentennial celebration of Granville from September 30 through October 2, 1955.

Through the past seventy years, officers and committees have labored under the greatest disadvantages and were unable to carry on the specific purpose of the Society, for lack of a suitably safe and permanent repository for their collections. The necessity for the frequent removals of their property resulted in losses and injuries that are irreparable. The fact that the possessions were simply in storage for safe keeping made them inaccessible to the public who would have greatly benefited.

Now for the last time, it's moving time again for our collections. They have been placed this summer of 1955 in their permanent home in our new Museum in "the little stone building." This should give a new vigorous impetus to the life and work of the Society. What a joy it will be to those who will be able to see these treasured documents of inestimable value. We will leave it to the gifted writer to describe the "new home and its possessions."

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of the  
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Term Ends 2004

Lance Clark  
Theresa Overholser  
Tom Martin

## The Old Colony Burying Ground

We begin our eleventh season of restoration in the Old Colony with the first Work Day of the 2002 season

**May 18<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 a.m.**

Come to the cemetery to lend your help and support. The Fannins will arrive in early May and many exciting projects are planned. Can you plant a flower, sight a straight line, measure and describe a gravestone, pass cool drinks, or dig a hole? All strengths and skills are needed and welcome. Join your friends in restoring this historic place.



## Old Colony Tour - May 30, 2002

The **Annual Twilight Tour of the Old Colony Burying Ground** will be held on **May 30<sup>th</sup>**, beginning at 7:00 pm. Featured, in costume, will be six former residents of Granville portrayed by six well-known contemporary residents.

Groups will be guided through the cemetery to hear accounts of their lives and times in Granville. Refreshments, information and pictorial images are available following the Tour in the Old Academy Building. This free annual tour is a gift to the community by the corps of volunteers who work on the restoration of the Old Colony.

**Save the date and join us!**

## IN MEMORIAM

The Granville Historical Society mourns the death of our Lifetime Board Member

### **Richard H. Mahard**

who died on March 9, 2002.

A knowledgeable historian of Granville, an instructor of the geology and geography of this area and the world, a tireless worker, wise councilor, and staunch supporter of the Society, he will be sorely missed.

## A Notice

Help us interpret Granville's history!

The Granville Historical Museum is now open on weekend days from 1:00 p.m. until 4:00 p.m. Spend a few hours showing the interesting exhibits in our Museum to visitors. Hours may be arranged. The docent group is organizing for the upcoming season.

Call for information about times for meetings and docent events.

587-3951 or 344-1291