

THE HISTORICAL TIMES

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Autumn 2000

JAMES GILRUTH: THE STORY OF A NINETEENTH CENTURY CIRCUIT RIDER



Mary Westlake Gilruth

sketch by Michael Jung

"Gilruth promotes higher-level education for women throughout his ministry. But he is even more atypical than his suffering only a little demotion at the hands of revisionists suggests."

(Tony Stoneburner)

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The Granville Circuit Journal

His Community freed no slaves. His book reunited no denominations. But these projects made his atypicality the most pronounced. What does his *Journal* on Granville Circuit let us see, besides his ministerial work and his passionate preoccupations? In Granville, Gilruth gathering apples and making cider at Esquire Gavitts, and gathering grafts there from the apple trees; living in a duplex house and preferring his half for the summer for the sake of his pregnant wife (shade will permit opening doors and letting in the cooling breeze rather than the beaming heat). Failing to catch the cow and drive it home. Gardening. Gathering hedge-seeds for planting in Iowa. Using mesmerism or hypnosis to ease the suffering of the painwacked terminally ill. And in Union Township, I think, acting as a messenger for a husband absent in Illinois who seeks to have his wife join him but whose in-laws try to persuade their daughter not to leave them; and in the northeast corner of Licking County, interviewing participant-observer Billie Drago about life

among native peoples. And the local Fourth of July in 1831! Let me read a sequence.

June 20 Mon. Rose at 5. Morning Rainy.... Wrote all day at an `oration.... to Deliver on the 4th of July before the Colonization Society—Much rain fell to day—to bed about 10.

June 21 Rose about 5 Morning Cloudy—Wrote today at the same as yesterday—day cloudy to bed about 9—this Day our child Naomi is ex [ce]dedingly sick.

June 25 Rode to Irville. This evening I finished my piece on Slavery &c &c desi[g]ned to be delivered as an oration on the 4th of July next before the Colonization Society of Granville.

June 30 Then Ride to Br Thos Dunn (of Knox Circuit) on my way? Reviewed My oration for the Colonization Society & read some in the Journal of health—at Br Dunns I read my Oration to the family & others present the result was Mrs Dunn gave me a Dol[ljar & his son—a lad of 9—15 cents for the Colonization Society.

Sund July 3 Rode to ?dresden, & preached at 3 to more than the house would hold but I fear not

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Map of Ohio after a map made in 1846
with locations from the diary of
Great-Grandmother Gilrath

Ashtabula
Painesville
Detroit
Lake St. Clair

Perryburg
Cleveland

Freemont
Sandusky
Wyandotte Mission

Reex
Cleveland

Marion



Polkman

Springfield

Northampton
Columbus

Grandville

Pulman
Zanesville

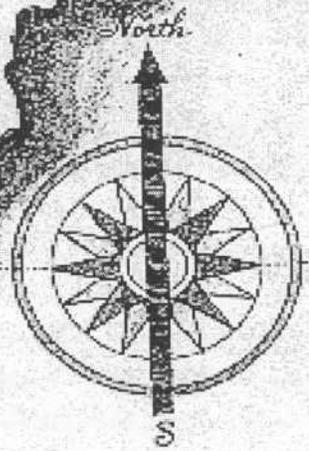


Cincinnati

Hillsborough
Chillicothe

Circleville
Lancaster
Adelphi

Callipolis



to much profit, however I enjoyed a comfortable feeling and the people gave good attention—Read discipline & then lifted a collection for the tract fund &c—then Set out for Irville on our way to Granville to attend the annual Meeting of the Colonization Society.

July 4 Mon Rose at 4 Morning clear—wrote a little in my diary—Set out for Granville 1/2 past 5 reading mr Ws view of the church, which I finished on the road; I would say of this work that it contains some good Ideas but it also shows that the author is after all a partizen not withstanding his declaired opposition to such things—he shows some strong conceits concerning the election of Elders: & the term of their office, in his opinion should be limited. Reached Granville at 12 & was immediately called on to deliver an address to the temperance society—this I did in a pleasant tone of voice but rather barren of matter but the people listened with ap[p]arent interestperhaps more arrested by the man[n]er than the matter—at 2 the Colonization Society met but a shower of rain falling the time prevented many—I read my address with tolerable grace—and it was listened to with almost profound silence and attention—when I closed Dr Bancroft Read another (of his composition) which was full of interest in matter

but he failed in point of delivery so much that I fear it had not that weight with its hearers that it merits; the Society then proceeded to pay up their subscriptions & Elect their officers—they elected the old ones—the whole sum subscribed by this society for the present year is.....at 5 I attended the monthly Prayer meeting of the Presbyterians—was invited to Speak & PRAY WHICH I did with liberty of feeling & I trust with profit to those that heard—was busied in the evening doing errands &c &c.

We regret that we do not have the text of Gilruth's talk or oration or address. I think it unlikely that it promoted stock colonization programs. Perhaps the history of the relation of the village to abolitionism needs revision; perhaps there were challenging views expressed before the advent of Hawley of Western Reserve & Wild of Oberlin.

I will close with an entry Gilruth made on his birthday in 1845:

Wed Jan 29. Rose early—This day I am fifty two Years Old—I find My eyesight has failed Some; Yet I Can read fine print by Candlelight— & find also I am inclined to look for a narrow place to le[a]p a brook; a block to mount my horse, & a good place to Cross a fence from all which & other Symptoms I conclude I am fairly over the top &

*on the down hill side of life
Well, tha[nk] God I am as well off
as I am, for I have neither spared
body nor mind—I now cannot
recollect of ever loosing an
engagement for stress of
we[a]ther or difficulty in roads,
& but 4 times of being prevented
by floods Since I was 18 Years of
age—I have Swam & Waded
through thick & thin—hot & cold
to Keep My Word. & I have
Kept!*

James Gilruth was a big person!

Tony Stoneburner
Denison University and the
Granville Historical Society



James Gilruth

Author's Postscript

Since presenting my talk, I have discovered a memoir by the second wife of James Gilruth, the wife of his ministry, published as *The Past Is Prologue: Meandering with Memoirs* by Harold H. Kynett, privately printed and issued by the Kynett family with the Season's Greetings at Christmas, 1954 [no place]. In the memoir, Mary Westlake Gilruth supplies a physical description of her husband during 1821, their period of first knowing one another:

He had beautiful brown hair, thrown back from his forehead and it laid in ringlets all over the back of his head. His hair was rather long. His skin was very fair and he had hazel eyes. He was large, weighing over 200 lbs., but not fleshy. He was six feet tall, with a most springy step—and handsome." [p. 54]

The book also provides a photograph of James Gilruth.

Tony Stoneburner
December 2000



SUCCESSFUL WALKING TOUR

The Historical Society's museum once again participated in the annual Holiday walking tour on the evening of December 6. This well-attended event is sponsored by the Granville Professional and Business Association. Over seven hundred visitors visited the museum the evening of the walking tour. Many enthusiastic comments were received about the new exhibits, both on the main floor and in the lower level tool collection.

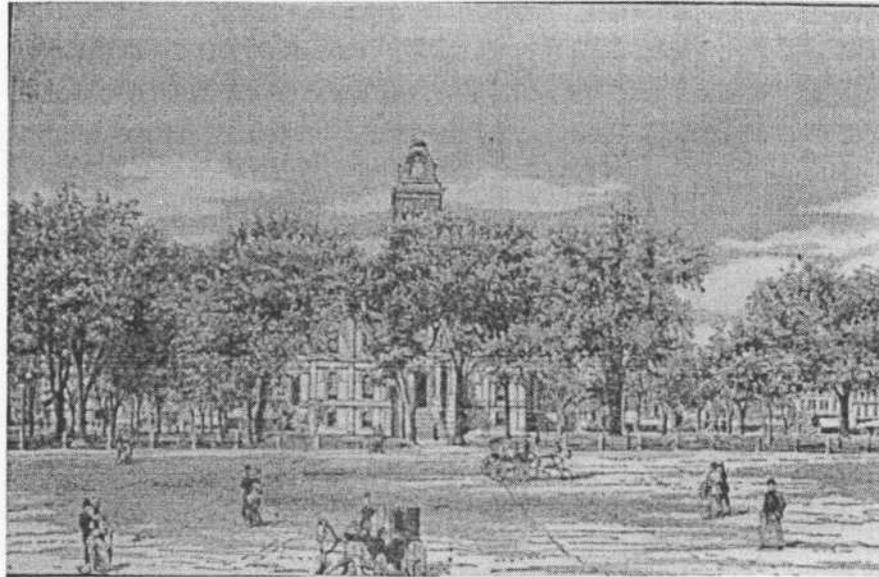
NOTE OF APPRECIATION

The Board of Management gratefully acknowledges a wonderful gift from Richard and Louise Shiels. The Shiels kindly gave the Historical Society a complete set of the Cat's Meow miniatures of our village buildings. These miniatures are on display in the rear room of the museum. Plan on visiting the museum when it opens officially for the 2001 season in April.



Bicentennial News

The 2005 Granville Bicentennial Committee calls our attention to the upcoming celebration for the two-hundredth anniversary of the founding of Granville. Many volunteers will be needed to undertake the various activities and events now in the planning stage. Check the 2005 Website. This Website is being developed by Don Young for the 2005 Committee. It is linked with the Granville, Mass. Website. Our Website also contains a link to a fascinating article by Francis Shepardson written in 1899, considering the Granville of Old in Massachusetts and the then Granville of new, in Ohio. This is an informative article that contains many old photographs of both Granvilles.



Newark Public Square 1890

Fourteenth Year
for the
Historical Times

We hope that the members of the Society
have enjoyed reading about Granville's history!

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Send comments, suggestions
or queries to:

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