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Interurban tracks looking east along Broadway at the base of Mount Parnassus.

Close, but no cigar Granville takes to the rails

By **THOMAS B. MARTIN**

Steel rails and crossties made up one of the kinds of roads that moved people to and from Granville for about ninety years as the village emerged from the nineteenth century. Railroads arrived on the scene too late to influence Granville's commercial or industrial development and vanished quietly as other modes of transportation superseded them. But in their heyday, the train and Interurban were the way to get somewhere — and with the web of rail connections throughout the country, a Granville resident could walk down to what is now the Granville Historical Society Museum, or the classic train station that the Montgomery

family has so lovingly restored at the base of South Main Street, or go to Newark's station to wait for the trip to begin to go almost anywhere.

Granville missed the arrival of all three of the forms of transportation that might have changed its history. The Ohio Canal came to Newark while Granville got only a fresh water feeder — which its residents quickly extended and turned into what functioned as a commercial spur as well as a water source. The National Road from Cumberland, Maryland to Illinois' then-capital Vandalia, now U.S. Highway 40, passed eight miles to the south. It was begun in 1825, the same year as the Ohio Canal. Both reached Licking County approxi-



The Granville T&OC station, on South Main Street, in busy days. Note the boxcar on other side of station. (Undated photo.)

mately seven years later. Granville Historian William T. Utter has noted that Granville's course was set in its first fifty years, and that it would grow as a town with education as its focus rather than industry no matter what the aspirations of some of the early residents may have been.

Railroads Come to Newark...

In the mid-nineteenth century, railroads rapidly replaced canals, and three came to Newark in a fairly brief time. The Sandusky, Mansfield and Newark road was completed first, in 1852, and in 1854 the Central Ohio, connecting Columbus and Zanesville with Bellaire, on the Ohio River, was built through Newark. These two railroads eventually became part of the Baltimore and Ohio system. In 1855 a railroad was completed from Steubenville to Newark, and was called the Steubenville and Indiana Railroad, more of a statement of geographical aspiration than of actual accomplishment. The Pennsylvania Railroad eventually absorbed it.

To take main line trains, Granville residents rode four miles south on Lancaster Road to Union Station in Union Township. Elias N. Fassett was determined to have a good view of his railway from his house, Dunlevy Place, and

there is a legend that he located the main line of the Central Ohio Railroad from Newark to Columbus at a site away from Granville because the terrain worked for a better view. The house, once a County Home and later the Bryn Mawr Restaurant, is on the west side of Lancaster Road two miles south of Granville.

...and Granville

When a railroad finally came to Granville, it was a relatively minor line.

The Ohio Central (as opposed to the Central Ohio) Railroad began its operations on May 29, 1880, a quarter century after Newark had become a railway center. Utter writes that the opening celebration involving over 700 train workers and catered by the women of the village "was one of the great evenings in the annals of the village."

In a small town, passenger trains represent romance and adventure, an expanded horizon: a train takes riders to some place that is important enough to serve as a *destination*, a place more exciting and full of much greater possibility than wherever they are now. At last Granville had a train line of its own, but it happened far too late to matter and

never was really important.

The quest for adventure got off to a sad start.

The first excursion over the O. C. Railroad to another town took place the week after the epic celebration, although not to a place that a person would dream of as a *destination*. For forty cents one could take the ten mile round trip to Alexandria. Passenger cars were not ready, so passengers sat on improvised seats on flatcars. On the return trip an accident suddenly halted the joviality when a passenger fell as he attempted to step from one flatcar to another and was killed instantly.

On February 15, 1881, the first mail carried to Granville by railroad arrived. Utter notes that there was an immediate improvement in the postal service of the village, but there was also nostalgia at the changing of the delivery system as one letter carrier chose the occasion to retire and was replaced by another who used a different delivery route. (Fifty years later, the construction of the present Post Office and its large number of mailboxes during the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration ended home delivery for a while. In the 1950s, villagers mourned the restoration of letter carriers because home delivery took away the daily social gathering when the mail arrived in one's post office box in the post office. This was a small town at its best.)

Utter states that Newark continued to be Granville's railroad town and was growing in importance as its trading center. Newark could be reached by two country roads at this point.

Too Late, but better than nothing

When a railroad finally came to the community, as Utter stresses, it was too late to change greatly the course of the development of the village. Starting out as the Ohio Central, Granville's railroad became the Toledo and Ohio Central and eventually a minor branch of the New York Central. It was a boon for the feed mill, hauled coal, and hauled passengers for more than fifty years.

There were two passenger trains a day. One could leave Toledo at 9:40 a.m. and arrive in Granville at 4:06 p.m. The line crossed the tracks of many other railroad companies, especially to the north, and a Granville passenger could change at one of those points and head east or west.

Not long after the line opened there was an accident caused by a steer that refused to yield for the train. The collision caused a significant derailment according to the *Granville Times* of July 28, 1880. The article states that there was no loss of life, except presumably that of the steer, which no doubt became a form of early road kill. By August 1886 the T. & O.C. was running an extra express car to meet "the extraordinary demands of the blackberry trade," per the *Times*.

There was also a Granville-Newark Hack line, dubbed "The Granville Chariot" that ran two round trips daily. It

Ohio Central Railroad, TOLEDO DIVISION. SPECIAL TIME TABLE, In Effect at 12 o'clock, noon, Sunday, October 10, 1880. Superceding Special Time Table of October 3d, 1880.

DATE	TIME	STATIONS.	DATE	TIME	Crossing Signals:
No. 10.	Mixed.		No. 11.	Mixed.	
6:00	9	FOSTORIA	10:1	6:45	At Fostoria Crossing: At Three Locusts for crossing of N. Y. P. & O. and Lake Erie, U. C. & T. Ry., and at Newark Crossing of the U. S. & O. Trains are stationed and will signal from other end. No train will be allowed to cross at any of the above points without first receiving signal from Fostoria.
6:30	9.5	NEW REICLE	10:11	6:50	Leveering. When Target is placed vertical, O. C. Trains will pass. When horizontal, U. S. & T. Trains will pass. When diagonal, no train will pass.
7:00	10.0	BERWICK	10:14	7:00	At Leveering Crossing: When Target is placed vertical, O. C. Trains will pass. When horizontal, U. S. & T. Trains will pass. When diagonal, no train will pass.
7:10	10.5	M' CUTCHEMSVILLE	10:19	7:10	At Leveering Crossing: When Target is placed vertical, O. C. Trains will pass. When horizontal, U. S. & T. Trains will pass. When diagonal, no train will pass.
7:45	10.8	SYCAMORE	10:23	7:45	At Leveering Crossing: When Target is placed vertical, O. C. Trains will pass. When horizontal, U. S. & T. Trains will pass. When diagonal, no train will pass.
7:50	11.0	PETERSBURG	10:24	7:50	At Leveering Crossing: When Target is placed vertical, O. C. Trains will pass. When horizontal, U. S. & T. Trains will pass. When diagonal, no train will pass.
8:10	11.5	LEMERT	10:27	8:10	At Leveering Crossing: When Target is placed vertical, O. C. Trains will pass. When horizontal, U. S. & T. Trains will pass. When diagonal, no train will pass.
8:20	11.8	BUCYRUS	10:28	8:20	At Leveering Crossing: When Target is placed vertical, O. C. Trains will pass. When horizontal, U. S. & T. Trains will pass. When diagonal, no train will pass.
10:00	10.0	NEW WINCHESTER	10:31	10:00	At Leveering Crossing: When Target is placed vertical, O. C. Trains will pass. When horizontal, U. S. & T. Trains will pass. When diagonal, no train will pass.
10:25	10.6	THREE LOCUSTS	10:37	10:25	At Leveering Crossing: When Target is placed vertical, O. C. Trains will pass. When horizontal, U. S. & T. Trains will pass. When diagonal, no train will pass.
11:00	11.4	LEVERING	10:39	11:00	At Leveering Crossing: When Target is placed vertical, O. C. Trains will pass. When horizontal, U. S. & T. Trains will pass. When diagonal, no train will pass.
11:30	12.3	MT. GILEAD	10:41	11:30	At Leveering Crossing: When Target is placed vertical, O. C. Trains will pass. When horizontal, U. S. & T. Trains will pass. When diagonal, no train will pass.
12:00	12.9	LINCOLN CENTER	10:44	12:00	At Leveering Crossing: When Target is placed vertical, O. C. Trains will pass. When horizontal, U. S. & T. Trains will pass. When diagonal, no train will pass.
12:30	13.3	MARENCO	10:47	12:30	At Leveering Crossing: When Target is placed vertical, O. C. Trains will pass. When horizontal, U. S. & T. Trains will pass. When diagonal, no train will pass.
1:00	14.0	COUNTY LINE	10:50	1:00	At Leveering Crossing: When Target is placed vertical, O. C. Trains will pass. When horizontal, U. S. & T. Trains will pass. When diagonal, no train will pass.
1:30	14.7	CENTERBURG	10:53	1:30	At Leveering Crossing: When Target is placed vertical, O. C. Trains will pass. When horizontal, U. S. & T. Trains will pass. When diagonal, no train will pass.
2:00	15.4	HARTFORD	10:56	2:00	At Leveering Crossing: When Target is placed vertical, O. C. Trains will pass. When horizontal, U. S. & T. Trains will pass. When diagonal, no train will pass.
2:30	16.1	JOHNSTOWN	10:59	2:30	At Leveering Crossing: When Target is placed vertical, O. C. Trains will pass. When horizontal, U. S. & T. Trains will pass. When diagonal, no train will pass.
3:00	16.8	ALEXANDRIA	11:02	3:00	At Leveering Crossing: When Target is placed vertical, O. C. Trains will pass. When horizontal, U. S. & T. Trains will pass. When diagonal, no train will pass.
3:30	17.5	GRANVILLE	11:05	3:30	At Leveering Crossing: When Target is placed vertical, O. C. Trains will pass. When horizontal, U. S. & T. Trains will pass. When diagonal, no train will pass.
4:00	18.2	P. H. CROSSING	11:08	4:00	At Leveering Crossing: When Target is placed vertical, O. C. Trains will pass. When horizontal, U. S. & T. Trains will pass. When diagonal, no train will pass.
4:30	18.9	HEBRON	11:11	4:30	At Leveering Crossing: When Target is placed vertical, O. C. Trains will pass. When horizontal, U. S. & T. Trains will pass. When diagonal, no train will pass.
4:50	19.5	LAKESIDE	11:14	4:50	At Leveering Crossing: When Target is placed vertical, O. C. Trains will pass. When horizontal, U. S. & T. Trains will pass. When diagonal, no train will pass.
5:10	20.1	MILLERSPORT	11:17	5:10	At Leveering Crossing: When Target is placed vertical, O. C. Trains will pass. When horizontal, U. S. & T. Trains will pass. When diagonal, no train will pass.
5:30	20.7	BUSH'S	11:20	5:30	At Leveering Crossing: When Target is placed vertical, O. C. Trains will pass. When horizontal, U. S. & T. Trains will pass. When diagonal, no train will pass.

W. H. VANDEGRIFT,
Master of Transportation.

G. G. HADLEY,
Gen'l Superintendent.

An Ohio Central Railroad schedule from its opening period. Note the time allowed between Granville and Alexandria.

ran from 1878 until the interurban line was completed in 1890, and took over the bridge over the Raccoon near Reddington Road that had been built for the canal feeder. Officially called an aqueduct, it had been rebuilt in 1835 to replace the original wooden version when it burned down. It became a road when the canal fell into disuse. The three-arch bridge is difficult to detect when one drives on it, and is the subject of the photograph in this article.

The Interurban

The interurban, essentially a rural streetcar or trolley that runs between towns rather than within one of them, importantly arrived in Granville in 1890. The Granville-Newark line may have been the first interurban route in the country. Its arrival meant that someone who lived in the core village could walk to the interurban, take it to Newark or Columbus, board a main line train and go to anywhere in the country, and eventually the world. College students could get from virtually everywhere in the country to train



The 1835 aqueduct that replaced the original wooden structure that bore feeder canal boats--and the canal itself--over Racoon Creek on what is now Cherry Valley Road near the Reddington Road intersection. The bridge later served as the interurban bridge before supporting today's vehicular traffic.

stations such as Newark, Mt. Vernon or Delaware and seldom have more than ten miles to cover by road to get to their campuses.

At the beginning, there were eight trips per day on the interurban. Later the frequency became hourly and in 1905, half-hourly. In 1891 the government granted the line a mail contract, which Utter believed to be the first in the country for an interurban company.

Also in 1891, the building that began its life as the Alexandrian Bank on the south side of Broadway became the interurban station*, with a siding running to the eastern side of the building (next to today's Park National Bank) for the unloading of express and freight. Later, South Main Street hill had to be altered for the interurban, with a cut at the edge of the Old Colony Burial Ground that enabled the interurban tracks to have a steady grade as the line was extended to the foot of Main Street hill for the convenience of passengers who wished to board the trains of the Ohio Central. This accommodated people from Johnstown and Croton who wished to shop in Newark. The main route went along Broadway and eventually used part of what is now Cherry Valley Road and became the third form of transportation to use the old aqueduct near Reddington Road and the bike path tunnel, not far from the present-day site of the Cherry Valley Lodge.

The interurban brought unfamiliar noises to the quiet town. Church members complained that the eight o'clock trolley disturbed their services. Utter observes, "Small boys analyzed the potentialities of the new layout for mischief and adventure. They found that they could 'hop' rides on the cars as they ascended Main Street hill, and that soap,

applied to the rails in the hollow where the line crossed Clear Run, could paralyze the stoutest motor." The speed of the interurban was "almost unbelievable." The interurban easily covered the eight-mile Cherry Valley route to Newark in seventeen minutes. For a real treat one could take the open-air car to Newark in the summertime. An eyewitness observation of an interurban from a train going from Newark and Zanesville was revealing: the interurban traveled as fast as the train, about forty miles an hour.

Great rail networks; slow getting there

Modern travelers who wish to avoid traveling by automobile may marvel at the geographic reach of nineteenth and early twentieth century passenger rail transportation, which after all could take one not only to New York but also to Black Hand Gorge and Buckeye Lake.

On the other hand, they would not marvel at the time it took. The early travelers were amazed that the speed they were traveling did not damage their bodies (there was concern, for example that a speed of forty miles per hour might damage a passenger's eyes despite evidence that a forty-mile-an-hour wind did not), and were delighted to travel faster than horses could pull or carry them. It took an hour and fifty minutes to get from Newark to Columbus. The interurban took two and a half hours to get from Columbus to Zanesville, an hour less than any other way, but still an hour and half longer than it did one hundred years later on

* In 1955, through the hard work of William T. Utter, Henry Eaton and others, the interurban station became the Granville Historical Society Museum.

the Interstate highway.

Denison Professor William G. Tight owned Granville's first recorded bicycle, the kind with an enormous wheel. In the 1890s, he once dropped his wife off at the Granville train station and cycled to Columbus in time to greet her upon her arrival, having arrived comfortably ahead of the train. Of course, she had to change in Thurston, about ten miles due south of Millersport and Buckeye Lake, to get from Granville to Columbus. Even the vaunted Twentieth Century Limited and Broadway Limited of the competing New York Central and Pennsylvania Railroads took sixteen hours to get from Chicago to New York at their peak in 1938, as they roared along at speeds up to eighty miles an hour.

As the post-Civil War period progressed, railway travel improved and stagecoaches and other horse-drawn modes of transport became local feeders rather than the prime method of transportation that they had become after Granville was first settled. By the time the interurban appeared it was both a relief to travelers and shoppers and a bane to merchants' existence because Granville folk could easily shop in Newark. Such necessities for horse-drawn itinerants as the still-new Granville Hotel and the Buxton Inn suddenly found their importance reduced as overnight spots for stagecoach travelers.

Modern time zones were officially established in 1883 as a necessity for railway timetables, and Granville landed on the western edge of the fifteen degrees of latitude that defines a time zone. The heretofore basis of time as "noon, local time" worked when one did not go very far very fast, but no more. Denison Professor Emeritus of History Clarke Wilhelm notes that during the Civil War, the correct time was, "What time you say it is."

The Dangers that lurked around the rails

Granville Times editions from 1880 until the turn of the twentieth century were full of train-related incidents and accidents, underlining the constant dangers that lurked for those who worked on and around the railroads. The following is a potpourri of story summaries by Laura Evans, who indexed the *Granville Times* through a grant by Elizabeth Eaton O'Neill: "horses startled... derailments... runaway colt and buggy at crossing... people in awe... train passengers put out fire at his house... house robbed, took train to Newark... passing train set fire to his house... nearly hit by train, arm broken in rescue... serious injury involving runaway electric car ...spaniel killed by train, trying to bring paper... narrow escape... horse killed by train... robbery and escape by train... unknown stranger cut in two by train... arm broken jumping from train... lost right foot in railway accident... fell off train trying to catch hat (this "outstanding" student from Denison broke his leg but survived)... fell off bike into train (this happened to a Granville resident in Indianapolis)... T&OC train-car accident-two fatalities ...crushed by trainand the sad story of the fireman who was killed in an accident leaving behind 'a wife and a widow' in Columbus." By the mid-nineteens incidents and injuries involving trains began to give way to those involving automobiles.

Presidents McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt came through Newark for whistle stop visits in the 1890s and early 1900s. Roosevelt's stop was timed to precisely three minutes as he held forth from the porch at the end of the observation car. Their trains passed four miles south of Granville, in sight of the house Elias Fasset built and of Union School, but not of Granville itself.



In its last decade before its 1925 closing, the Interurban turns from East Broadway into the station, which is today's Granville Historical Society Museum.

Tickets could be bought at train or interurban stations or aboard the conveyance. Newark's Park National bank ran an ad for those planning to travel abroad in the July 22, 1909 *Times* noting that they could sell railway as well as steamship tickets. The manager of the foreign department would call upon interested clients and discuss any route they might have desired. The bank issued letters of credit, money orders, and travelers' checks payable in any part of the world.

Interurbans in perspective

Carl T. Weingardner, an authority on Licking County railroading and interurbans notes, "The electric interurban of yesteryears was the Greyhound and truck line of today. Of course, it was more economical to run buses and trucks. There was no roadbed to pay taxes on. There was no maintenance of tracks and pavement in city streets. There were no crews needed to fix track and repair bridges. And no costly power houses to run." As for comfort, he adds, "The cars swayed and lurched, and threw off an electric shower at night as the trolley poles struck poor insulation. Riding in some was like plunging into an electrical storm at night with the interior lights flashing on and off and the sky lit for miles like the Northern Lights with the arcing of the trolley wire."

The "traction property" of the closed interurban line was sold at auction in February 1925.

Out with a whimper

Transcontinental train travel could be luxurious, but much of it was the origin of the term "to hell in a day coach." Major railway accountants discovered that passenger service was uneconomical in the 1950s and '60s and management let the whole national passenger system begin to run down. The Tommy and Karolyn Burkett family tells the story of running out of diapers on a long train ride that ran many hours behind schedule in the 1960s with their three young children. It was hot and the train was not air-conditioned. Such distress as the Burketts' was common as trains often ran hours and hours late. Nevertheless, until the early 1970s one could take several passenger trains each way from Newark throughout the day to New York and Washington in the East and Chicago and St Louis in the West, and there connect to glamorous sounding trains to the West Coast.

Granville's last passenger train was a single passenger coach coupled to a slow freight train, and community memory holds that even that service ended in the 1950s. The village train station continued to function as a freight and Railway Express station (particularly handy for shipping trunks to Denison and home at the end of term), and the feed mill and Granville Lumber used railway cars for deliveries. To the delight of children of all ages, cabooses would continue to appear at the end of every freight train, regard-



The T&OC bridge at the foot of Clouse Lane, where a bike path bridge is now situated.

less of its length, for as long as trains ran to Granville along what is now the bike path. The New York Central tried for decades to abandon the Granville branch before finally receiving government permission in the 1970s.

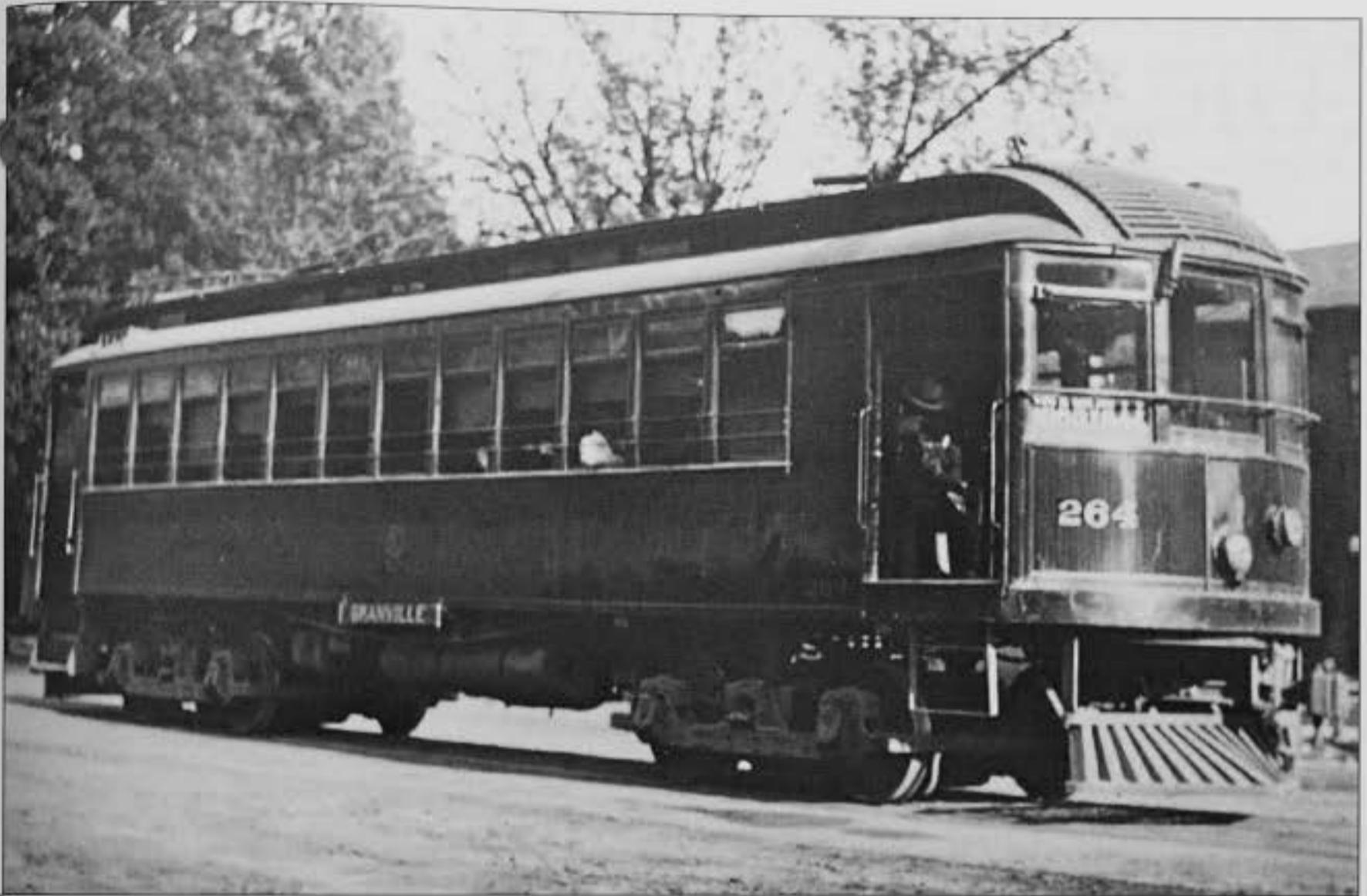
Beginning in earnest in the 1950s, automobiles, the interstate highway system, and buses spelled the end for short haul rail service in sparsely populated areas such as Licking County. Flying — and the family station wagon — had virtually replaced long distance rail travel by the 1970s when Amtrak emerged from a welter of tired passenger services gladly given up by private railroads and continued to limp along without growing for the next forty years.

Granville was out of luck: in the early 1970s Columbus and Phoenix had become the largest cities in the western hemisphere without passenger train service. The lasting memories are the bike path, the station building on South Main, and the Historical Society Museum.

Tom Martin is editor of the Granville Historical Times and chairs the Granville Historical Society Publications Committee.

SOURCES

The primary sources for this article are *Granville: The Story of an Ohio Village*, by William T Utter (1956) and *The Granville Times*, published from 1880 until 1941. The author drew anecdotes and observations from conversations with Rob Drake, Eric Jones, the late Wyndham Southgate and the late Richard Mahard in addition to those cited in the article. Broader perceptions and many details came from former Granville Historical Society Archivist Flo Hoffman. The Licking County Library has a shelf full of articles on Ohio railroading and the interurban by Carl T. Weingardner, and the author used portions of several of the volumes as background. Also on the shelf is Henry Christiansen's *Ohio Trolley Trails*. All photos are from the Granville Historical Society Archives.



ABOVE: An interurban car.

LEFT: An agent from the station picked up three girls' trunks at Denison in 1957 and hopes they will send him a check.

NEW YORK CENTRAL SYSTEM

MISS KATY NICOLA
 BRACKEN HEIGHTS, OHIO JUL 1 1957 - PAID - GRANVILLE, OHIO
 JUNE 26, 1957

MISS MARY J. DAVIS
 BRACKEN HEIGHTS, OHIO JUL 1 1957 - PAID ✓

MISS OVERDOLYH HUGG
 BRACKENFIELD, N.J. JUL 1 1957 - PAID ✓

MY DEAR LADIES,

I CALLED THE UNIVERSITY THIS PM AND MR. GUY HAINMOND AT DENISON
 PICKED UP YOUR TRUNKS AND BROUGHT THEM DOWN TO THE DEPOT FOR ME TO SHIP.
 I HAVE BILLED THEM AND AM ATTACHING A RECEIPTED BILL WITH YOUR COPIES OF
 THE BILL OF LADING. THE TRUNKS WILL LEAVE GRANVILLE, OHIO AROUND 830 AM
 MONDAY JUNE 27TH, 1957. SO IF YOU GIRLS WILL SEND ME YOUR CHECKS FOR
 THE AMOUNT SHOWN ON FREIGHT BILL AND BILL OF LADING, AMOUNT SHOWN AS
 FULLY PREPAID AND CHECKS MADE IN FAVOR OF THE NEW YORK CENTRAL RAILROAD
 CO., I WILL BE MOST HAPPY. I AM ONLY TO PLEASED TO DO THIS FAVOR FOR YOU
 AND HOPE YOU WILL DO ME THE SAME BY SENDING YOUR CHECKS BY RETURN MAIL.
 I WOULD ALSO APPRECIATE YOU GIRLS DROPPING ME A LINE WHEN YOUR TRUNKS
 ARRIVE AT THE PARTICULAR STATIONS AND WHEN YOU PICK THEM UP. THANKS MUCH

I AM SINCERELY,

P. R. SWINEHARTS, AGENT
P.R. Swineharts
 NEW YORK CENTRAL RAILROAD CO.
 GRANVILLE, OHIO

EDITOR'S NOTE: Both articles in this issue of the Historical Times point to 2013. Kevin Bennett's piece regarding Abolition in the 19th Century anticipates a program in October that will recreate the great Abolition debate held in Granville and cited in the article. The second volume of the Pocket Histories will focus on Abolition in Granville and the country and will be written by Dr Mitchell Snay from Denison's Department of History. Dr. Snay will also speak during the weekend that focuses on abolition. The article on railroads foreshadows the first Pocket History due in 2013, one that will focus on aspects of transportation in Granville's development.

The strange case of Solomon Sturges

A chapter in Granville's abolitionist history

By B. KEVIN BENNETT

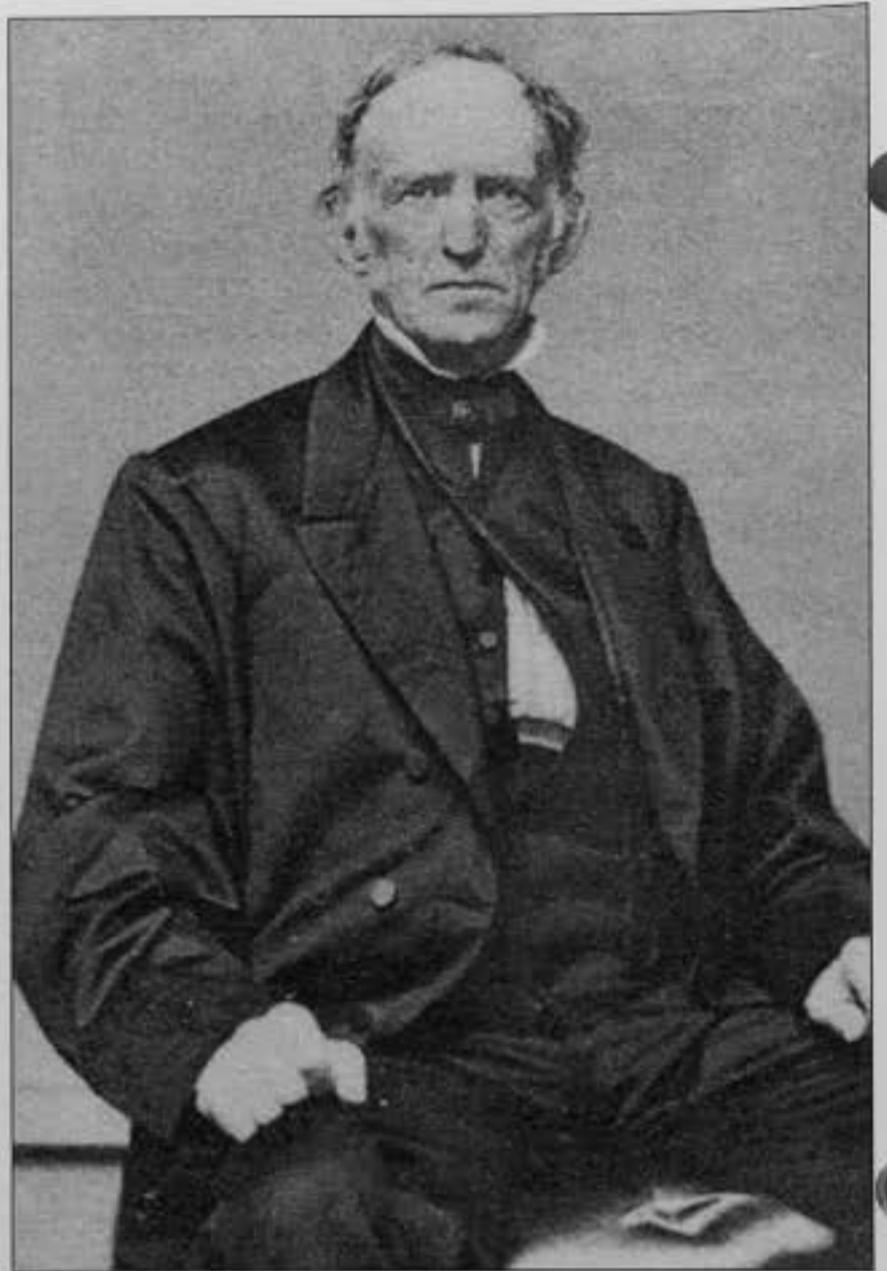
"I have a plan...for furnishing freedmen of the south employment and providing them with comfortable homes & the means of support for themselves & families ... upon my lands"

-- Solomon Sturges to Sec. Of Treasury Salmon Chase -March 2, 1863

"Solomon Sturges is convalescing from a serious paroxysm of insanity"

-- Dr. W.W. Bancroft to Sec. Of Treasury Chase - March 2, 1863

During the years leading up to the Civil War, the history of the Granville community was marked by considerable anti-slavery activity. Long a hotbed of abolitionist sentiment, it was the site of a number of anti-slavery gatherings including the state abolitionist convention in 1836. This latter event also occasioned a backlash from some locals who were less receptive to the abolitionist point of view. This culminated in Granville's "Great Riot" that degenerated into a violent melee in the village streets between opposing factions. Granville still points with pride to a number of still existing houses that served as havens for escaped slaves on the Underground Railroad. Within this proud history as a bellwether in the fight against slavery is an obscure but interesting chapter. It involves a triangle of Dr. William W. Bancroft, a prominent Granville physician; Solomon Sturges, a wealthy Ohio industrialist; and Salmon P. Chase, a politically powerful member of President Lincoln's cabinet.



A portrait of Solomon Sturges.

The setting for the story takes place in March 1863. The nation was two years into a bloody Civil War and it had been several months since President Abraham Lincoln had changed the moral course of the conflict by issuing the Emancipation Proclamation freeing the slaves. Despite the bloody reality of the war, everyday life within the Granville community continued much as it had before the conflict. One of the most prominent local businesses that continued to prosper during the war was the Granville Institute of Hydropathy. This unique medical establishment, popularly known as the "Water Cure" was founded in 1852 by a Dr. William W. Bancroft. Hailing from one of Granville's most prominent families, Bancroft was born in Granville, Massachusetts in 1805. In 1814 his father, Azariah Bancroft, moved with his family to Granville, Ohio. In keeping with the family tradition of emphasis on education, William graduated from the Ohio Medical College with honors in 1827. In the following year he married the daughter of another distinguished Granville family and opened up a medical practice in the village. He later became interested in hydropathy, a hygienic form of wellbeing practiced by

the ancient Romans, and established the "Water Cure". Bancroft, like the rest of his family was a dedicated abolitionist and active in the anti-slavery movement. Indeed, it was at a relative's barn that the notorious abolitionist convention of 1836 was held.

The Granville Institute of Hydropathy was operated as a hotel-type hospital, which focused on mineral water baths for patients suffering from a variety of ills, although it appears that those suffering from chronic rheumatism benefited the most. While the mineral water was the main feature of the famous "cure", there also was a systematic physical exercise regimen as well as a special medicine routinely described as "vile tasting". The reputation of the "Water Cure" was such that it brought patients from near and far, most well to do. One of these patients in early 1863 was the wealthy Chicago industrialist, Solomon Sturges. His wife Lucy had passed away in Granville in July 1859 while obtaining treatment from Dr. Bancroft.

Like Bancroft, Sturges descended from old New England stock, his father having been a Revolutionary War veteran. Born in 1796 in Fairfield, Connecticut, he was associated early in life with a prominent Washington banker by the name of Cochran. Acquiring business skills and a financial stake, he moved west and settled in the bustling trade hub of Zanesville. There he quickly married the sister of Ebenezer Buckingham. He went into a partnership with his brother-in-law and formed Buckingham & Co. This firm, one of the most widely known firms in the West for the next quarter century, was a highly successful trading and mercantile business. A leading citizen of his community, Sturges was a generous benefactor to educational and charitable causes. He also was committed to the anti-slavery crusade. He later shrewdly parlayed his modest fortune into a larger one by acquiring a number of grain elevators in Chicago. Reaching a lucrative agreement with the Illinois Central Railroad, he soon had a virtual monopoly over the grain traffic in and out of Chicago. By the time of the Civil War, Solomon Sturges was a renowned wealthy businessman with considerable contacts and influence in the spheres of business and politics. As a prominent contributor to the new Republican Party, he had access to leading party figures. He invited Lincoln to reside at his Chicago home during the 1860 Republican convention.

Early 1863 found Solomon Sturges in Granville as a patient of the famed "Water Cure". The exact cause of his visit or ailment is not disclosed although there are indications, which are discussed later, that his mental health was thought to be in decline. Sturges' stay at the Water Cure did not bring a halt to his ambition and activities. In March 1863 he penned a letter from Granville to one of the most powerful and influential public figures in the country, Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase. A former governor of Ohio,

presidential aspirant, (and future Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court), Chase was a radical Republican who was well known for his anti-slavery views. Sensing an opportunity to turn a business deal while at the same time providing assistance to the newly emancipated blacks, Sturges submitted the following letter for Chase's consideration:

March 2nd/63
Hon. S.P. Chase Sect.

My dear Sir

For six months past I have been elaborating in my mind a plan for furnishing a portion of the freedmen of the south employment (with part compensation) & providing them with comfortable homes & the means of support for themselves & families.

Now it has occurred to me that I could with advantage to myself and great benefit to the freed slaves of the South by at once giving them employment upon my lands in southwestern Missouri.

Some ten years since I selected with great care by personal examination about thirty thousand acres of land in the Counties of Lawrence, Gasper, Barton, Union, Bates, Henry, Cedar, Polk, Dade, St. Clair & Green & I am well satisfied that under judicious management they may this year all be converted into fertile cotton fields.

I propose to do this to the extent of affording employment to all colored persons who would rather work than starve or suffer for the necessaries of life. I can see no limit to the number I can employ with advantage to all parties. I know that with a cash outlay of not over ten or fifteen dollars to each good two strong log houses (four doors, glass sash & nails) can be constructed capable of well accommodating a dozen persons.

You will oblige me by submitting this to the Secty. Of War & the President & if you all concur with me in opinion that it is also desirable for the Government as well as the poor sufferers that this plan should be carried into effect, I should be glad to have the Secty. Of War address a letter to Gen. Curtis¹ at St. Louis instructing him to afford every facility in his powers to forward my plans, not incompatible with the other of the Government service. I expect to be at St. Louis within ten days to make the preliminary arrangements for the work, if I can have the sanction and reasonable countenance of the Government.

An early answer to this directed to me at Zanesville, Ohio, care of A.A. Guthrie will much oblige me.

With great regard, I am
Your Friend
Solomon Sturges

Accompanying the letter was a short cover letter penned by Dr. William Bancroft, the physician at the Water Cure, who was at that time treating Sturges.

Granville, Ohio

March 2, 1863

Hon. S.P. Chase

Dear Sir

In explanation of the accompanying letter from Mr. Solomon Sturges,

I deem it proper to say that he is in my house and under my care and is now apparently convalescing from a serious paroxysm of insanity. In the present state of his mind I could not without a serious contest refuse to allow him to mail this letter to you.

If you should deem it proper to say to him in reply that his plan could not be safely entered upon in the present state of our national affairs, it would have a salutary effect upon him.

Respectfully

W.W. Bancroft

This then raises the mystery surrounding Solomon Sturges and his proposal to help provide for a future for newly freed blacks. Was this truly a mad scheme dreamt up by a man with declining mental faculties or was Solomon Sturges a social visionary misunderstood by his peers? Certainly on its face the plan was feasible and commendable in its purpose. What Sturges proposed was little different from the Freedmen's Bureau program implemented by the federal government immediately after the Civil War to provide assistance to the newly emancipated blacks of the South. Both plans envisioned providing blacks with land to farm along with housing so as to provide a basis of self-sufficiency. With the slogan of "40 acres and a mule", the Freedmen's Bureau differed only in that blacks would be provided land outright from that confiscated from Confederates. Maybe Dr. Bancroft had reservations over Sturges' ability to follow through on his plans or felt that rational, sane people didn't give away 30,000-plus acres. Certainly, a project designed to help the blacks should have been favorably looked upon by Dr. Bancroft given his reputation as an anti-slavery activist. There is very little available to shed light on Dr. Bancroft's motivations or Solomon Sturges' mental state. Perhaps the answer lies in part in an addendum from Sturges to Chase attached to the March 2, 1863 letter:

Granville

P.S. I received this fall a letter from a Miss Lucy



Solomon Sturges and wife.

Chase of Worcester, Mass. Soliciting aid for a benevolent object & afterward another letter, written from Salem, Mass. in answer to my response to her first letter.

May I beg to be informed by you whether you know such "Lady" & if so, whether she is of your acquaintance? I learn she is a maiden lady of 38 or 39 years & of most excellent reputation. I know she is as smart as the Emperor Napoleon & I confess to a desire to see her Ladyship.

She is rather young to have arrived at perfection, but I guess she is as near to it as you are or any of us. Guard her wisely (illegible).

(Private)

Solomon Sturges

While somewhat tame by current standards, the letter on its face seems somewhat inappropriate to attach to official correspondence and assumes a degree of familiarity unwarranted in this case. The letter also seems to offer a strong hint that Solomon Sturges was a little unsettled in his mind and perceived grandiose schemes not grounded in reality. If so, perhaps his age (67) and the recent death of his wife of

many years played a part. This realization then may well be the explanation behind the attempt by Dr. Bancroft to subvert the plan to assist newly freed blacks, a plan it is presumed that he ordinarily would have supported.

Additional light on the state of Solomon Sturges was recently uncovered by local historian Maggie Brooks in reviewing the letters of Sarah and Dr. Edwin Sinnet. In a brief letter to her husband who was absent on military duty, Sarah makes mention of Sturges:

Home, Sabbath evening, Feb 22, 1863

Dearly loved husband,

. . . . Mr. Sturges is still at Dr. Bancroft's, is in the room over their parlor, is raving most of the time. Mr. Whiting and Uncle Justin Hillyer take care of him. He breaks the windows and makes sad work I assure you. I don't see any use of keeping him there. I should think the asylum were the best place for him.

Good night, from your ever aff. and devoted wife,
Sarah A. Sinnet²

As a person of renown and means, it is highly unlikely that Mrs. Sinnet's observations and conclusions regarding Sturges would have been made lightly. His public stature was analogous to modern day business titans such as Warren Buffet or T. Boone Pickens, individuals not airily dismissed as insane and best consigned to an asylum. Whether his condition was mental, physical or both, the evidence strongly suggests that Solomon Sturges was operating under a considerable disability at this time.

In any event it appears that Secretary Chase politely dismissed the proposal and it was relegated to the dusty shelf of obscurity. It is interesting to speculate as to whether the Sturges plan would have been successful in bringing some small measure of relief to the destitute freed blacks who so desperately needed assistance. Certainly, it could not have failed any worse than the "40 acres and a mule" plan envisioned by the Freedmen's Bureau. Hampered by a declining public interest in the welfare of the black population, the effort collapsed when ex-Confederates were able to claim back their previously confiscated lands that the federal government had planned on distributing to the freed blacks. This failure on the part of the federal government to meet this commitment has caused repercussions lasting until this day, most surrounding various discussions of "reparations"

With regard to the main players of this small drama, Solomon Sturges died the following year, leaving his extensive business holdings to his sons.³ He is buried under an impressive monument in Woodlawn Cemetery in Zanesville. Salmon Chase unsuccessfully vied for the Republican nomination for President in 1864 and went on to become Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. He



Sturges' grave in Zanesville.

served in that capacity until his death in 1873. Dr. William Bancroft of Granville continued to manage the Water Cure until 1865 when, his health broken by overwork, he sold his interest. Continuing in retirement to be active in educational pursuits, he died in June 1870. All but forgotten, this small chapter illustrates another interesting "what-if" of American history that is intertwined with our community's past.

B. Kevin Bennett is President of the Granville Historical Society and an authority on Granville's participation

in the American Civil War. He is a frequent contributor to the Historical Times.

FOOTNOTES

¹Sturges refers here to Major General Samuel R. Curtis, commander of Union forces in Missouri. Curtis was an accomplished soldier who served in both the Mexican War and the Civil War. He was the Union General in charge of the victory at the Battle of Pea Ridge, Arkansas, the capture of Helena, and repelling General Price's 1864 invasion of Missouri and Kansas. After the war he was a Congressman from Iowa. Of interest to local readers was that he spent his childhood in the nearby community of Brownsville.

²These and other selected pieces are contained in a soon-to-be-published book, authored by Ms. Brooks titled *By Means of Ink and Paper: The Civil War Correspondence of Edwin and Sarah Sinnet*. This is part of the continuing series of "Pocket Histories" published by the Granville Historical Society. The book provides interesting insights into the local community and its people during the Civil War period.

³The Sturges children, like their father, successful in business and the arts. His grandson, Preston Sturges, achieved fame as a screenwriter in Hollywood during the 1940-50s, winning several Oscars.

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