



# THE HISTORICAL TIMES

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## To the manor born

### Sallie Jones Sexton is a Granville legend

By WAYNE PIPER

Free-spirited child. Bryn Mawr scholar. Avid horsewoman. Theater impresario. Irreverent wit. Vivid storyteller. Intrepid soul. All these terms characterize a woman who in her lifetime was and still remains a Granville legend.

She was Sallie Jones Sexton.

Sarah "Sallie" Follett Jones, born in 1912, was the elder of two daughters of John Sutphin Jones (1849-1927) and his second wife, Alice Baxter Bartlett (1874-1931). Her father, who had made his fortune with the Sunday Creek Coal Company, railroads, and land development arrived in Granville in the 1890s. Jones was a self-made man who was viewed by some in the village as a robber baron but by others as a generous benefactor. In 1905 Jones purchased the mansion just outside of the village and rechristened it Bryn Du — "Black Hill". Jones' first wife Sarah Fidelia Follett died in 1910. They were childless.

John Jones met Alice Bartlett while on a business



This formal portrait of Sallie Jones Sexton hangs in the Bryn Du Mansion.

trip, and the couple was married in 1911. Alice Bartlett was a widow whose lineage reached back to the House of Orange in England. As mistress of Bryn Du, Alice often hosted the Granville Music Club and was seen by villagers as a gracious lady. Of her parents' marriage, Sallie said, "Here was my mother with all the breeding in the world and no money, and here was my father with all the money in the world and no breeding!"<sup>1</sup> From Sallie's perspective that was the foundation of an ideal match that,

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*Wayne Piper is a member of the Publications Committee of the Granville Historical Society, a retired librarian, a member of St. Luke's Episcopal Church, and a resident of Granville. The author is sure that more stories of Sallie's life and exploits are waiting to be told. He invites readers of "The Historical Times" to share their recollections via e-mail to [wwp1946@gmail.com](mailto:wwp1946@gmail.com) in the hope of providing content for a future follow-up issue on Sallie's life and times.*

**Sallie in profile  
for graduation from  
Rosemary Hall in  
1930.**

SALLIE JONES  
"Sallie"

*"All great men are dying, I feel ill  
myself."*

Entered school 1926-27; Cheer Leader, Sub on Library Committee, Equites, Hospes; 1927-28, Equites, Library Committee, Prize Day Marshal, Greek Club, R. H. in Track, History Prize, Prize for Improvement in Spoken English; 1928-29, Equites Board, Library Committee, Hospes, Question Mark Board, Answer Book Board, Athletic Association Manager, Prize Day Marshal, Vice-Track Captain, R. H. in Basketball, R. H. in Track, R. H. in Riding; 1929-30, Athletic Association Manager, Library Committee, Equites, Hospes, Answer Book Board, French Club, English Club, R. H. in Hockey, R. H. in Basketball, R. H. in Track, R. H. in Riding.

Bryn Mawr



indeed, lasted until the passing of both her parents. Sallie called the mansion home from her birth until a reversal of fortune necessitated selling the property in 1976.<sup>2</sup>

The stately home contains 52 rooms and several outbuildings. At its height, the estate encompassed 600 acres and was always considered by Mr. Jones to be his "farm". The estate provided an idyllic setting for a young and free-spirited girl like Sallie. Her mother's efforts to instill a sense of decorum included hiring a governess and attempting to train Sallie to a standard of gentility to which the young girl did not aspire. Sallie's preference was to spend time in the barns with her father and the hired hands. There she began to cultivate her love of horses and various and sundry other animals as well. And it was there, too, that she reputedly acquired a colorful vocabulary that she used freely and to various advantage throughout her life.

Sallie got her first pony when she was only two years old. In those days ponies were used in the coalmines Jones owned and from that stock he presented his daughter with a Welsh pony that cemented her life-long passion for horses. Sallie once quipped that "If a child survives a pony, a horse will never kill him." Her first pony was a little bay called "Tiny". The pony's favorite trick was to gallop at full tilt, then slam on the brakes, put her head down, thereby pitching Sallie to the ground. When

this happened, and when someone at the house eventually missed the young girl, they'd begin to search for her. According to Sallie they would find her with Tiny's hoofs planted firmly on her chest and needing to be rescued from the high-strung horse.<sup>3</sup>

Her other hobby growing up was raising rabbits and bantam hens. When she was 10 years old, she had 110 Flemish Giant rabbits, some of which she would try to sell to her parents' house guests. Sallie remembered trying to make a deal with the president of the Pennsylvania Railroad to buy a rabbit, but recalled that she couldn't get him to take even one rabbit on trial.<sup>4</sup> In later life Sallie retained fond memories of idyllic childhood days at Bryn Du surrounded by her parents' love and support.

Sallie attended elementary school in Granville but stood out from the other students when she arrived each morning in the family's chauffeured limousine. Local memory has it that what did make her popular with other students was sharing the 'specialized' language she'd learned from the farm hands in the barns at Bryn Du.

In 1926 when she was 14, Sallie left for boarding school at Rosemary Hall in Connecticut. Rosemary Hall was founded in 1890 on the principle of female self-sufficiency and as a school that would train girls in the "domestic arts." The school now exists as Choate Rosemary Hall following the merger of the



**Sallie dressed in an unconventional turtleneck for graduation from Bryn Mawr in 1934.**

two single-sex preparatory schools in 1971.

Over the course of her life, Sallie's spirit of self-sufficiency would serve as a keystone to her personality. Horses continued to be an integral part of Sallie's life at school where she rode on the school team and helped the headmistress with her horse named Christmas Morning. Sallie graduated from Rosemary Hall in 1930. Even then her graduation picture in the school's yearbook, *The Brief*, suggests the individualism that would become a hallmark of her life. While the other graduates faced the camera, Sallie's picture is in profile – a pose unconventional for the time.

John Jones died in 1927 while Sallie was a student at Rosemary Hall. He had always placed a strong emphasis on the importance of education even though he himself had never been able to attend college. And he had once promised Sallie that if she completed her education she could have, within reason, all the horses she wanted.<sup>5</sup> That was more than enough incentive for Sallie.

Honoring her father's wishes, Sallie applied, was accepted, and enrolled at Bryn Mawr College in 1930. She majored in English and graduated summa cum laude in 1934. As a fashion note, while all the

other young women in the 1934 year book are pictured wearing standard black drapes with a discreet "V"-neckline, Sallie is wearing a turtleneck — one more example of her independent spirit? Perhaps. The college yearbook, *The Bryn Mawr Almanac*, lists Sallie as Editor-in-Chief of the college news and nicknames her "Queen of Hearts."<sup>6</sup>

Following graduation, Sallie was offered a job with *Time* magazine. However, by this time Sallie's mother, Alice, had also passed away, and Sallie missed the farm. So upon graduation in 1934 at the age of 22, she returned to Bryn Du to manage the Hereford cattle operation and to start collecting on her father's promise to get some nice horses on the farm.

In 1937 Sallie married James Sexton, Jr. of Bexley, Ohio. The marriage was short-lived, and the couple divorced in 1939. Sallie is reputed to have quipped in her inimitable style that the marriage ended because she "didn't want to be a brood mare to a jackass". She never remarried.

During the years that followed, Sallie managed the farm and continued to build not only her stable of horses but also a national reputation as an excellent and principled horsewoman. Sallie often said, "Horses and I understand each other." Sallie was a self-taught "jumper" who adored jumping horses on a variety of challenging courses. As the years went on, she received several championships on the outside courses that were popular at the time. She became a licensed hunter and jumper judge when the American Horse Show Association (AHSA) began licensing in the 1930s, and she was involved with the local Ohio hunt scene, serving as master of the Headley Hunt in Columbus.<sup>7</sup>

Sallie was always outspoken about protecting the welfare of the horse and on the need for professionals to conduct themselves with integrity and honesty. She used her influence to address issues and solve problems in the equine industry. One of her greatest accomplishments was convincing her fellow horsemen to introduce drug testing and penalties in the late 1960s. Using performance-enhancing drugs had become a common, competitive practice at that time, so her stance was highly controversial. Sallie stood firm on her belief that drug testing was the right thing to do and would hear no argument against it. Her determination and influence at that time and in many other situations helped earn her the AHSA's

Lifetime Achievement Award in 1992.

On the local scene, Sallie encouraged the love and sport of horses among young people in the community. For many years in Licking County, she held 4-H Guernsey cattle clubs and equitation clubs — the latter devoted to the art of riding on horseback. That involvement stemmed from her belief that anyone who was successful had a responsibility to work with young people. One of those young people is present-day Newark resident Laura Sundin Bracken. Bracken has fond memories of the summers she spent during her high school years working with Sallie and others on the farm in the early-to-mid 1970s. She recalls:

“The equestrian clubs at Bryn Du were actually full blown, professionally judged horse shows. They were very popular with hundreds of horses and ponies competing during the summer seasons. Points were accumulated and at the end of the summer Sallie would preside over a very nice banquet at the Granville Inn where she would award ribbons, silver trophies and money prizes, and would regale the attendees with her usually hilarious memories of the past season. “We may have worked more than we played: we were kind of farm workers who rode, but the reality is that we did work hard and Sallie was quite the disciplinarian. We gladly and even often gleefully put shoulder to shovel (or pitchfork!) for her. We were all about the riding, jumping fences, the competition. Horses were our whole lives back then. Everything we did revolved around the horses and Sallie. We shared her love of horses all the way. We knew we were getting an amazing opportunity riding under her tutelage. She was one of the most respected horsewomen in the country, and we were the Bryn Du Junior Riding Team! What an honor! Her fabulous house, barn and grounds were our playground, and we surely knew it.

“The passion to do our best, work hard to excel, take responsibility for our horses and encourage each other at all times no matter how we were doing ourselves — the aches and pains of shoveling out stalls were far outweighed by the fun, the success, the ribbons, the friendships — and the laughter above all.”

Sallie's second love was theater. An article in the *Columbus Business Forum* in the summer of 1969 reports that Sallie's interest in the theater dated back to her years at Bryn Mawr when she was editor



**Sallie was briefly married to James Sexton, Jr., with whom she is pictured.**

of the campus newspaper and received tickets for New York shows. Among her Princeton and Yale friends were other eager theater novices including Vincent Price and Jose Ferrer. Sallie became executive producer and manager of the Playhouse-on-the-Green (POG) in Worthington, Ohio in 1962. As in other aspects of her life, Sallie set high standards for the theater company. Equity actors were frequently in the company, and Sallie traveled to New York several times each year to line up plays and professional talent. Critics of the productions Sallie supervised commented that no expense was spared and nothing was second rate. When the box office revenues didn't cover all the costs, Sallie supplied the difference.

During the years at POG, Sallie enjoyed offering entr'acte chats. In true form, her candid and saucy commentaries delighted audiences. “We may yet be known as the only theater in the United States with fully-clothed actors,” she quipped. “The real reason our actors are going to keep their clothes on at POG this season isn't just because we are old hat but our weather's so variable ... and we like to be different. The truth is, though, that after two seasons of viewing nudity on New York and London stages, I've come to realize that a nude male actor isn't very attractive running up and down stairs, and an actress can be pretty passable from the rear but can be terribly disillusioning when she turns around! And another thing, it's very disconcerting when the



**Sallie shows Cleone in the old Wannamaker Oval at the Devon Horse Show.**

actors come to make their curtain calls fully clothed. You just can't recognize them. All the familiar landmarks are gone!"<sup>8</sup>

In addition to the Bryn Du farm, John Sutphin Jones had also developed the Granville Golf Course and the Granville Inn. In 1908 Jones acquired the land across the street from the Buxton Inn, and in 1922 began the construction of the Inn, which opened to the public in 1924. On his death, John Jones had appointed Chester Cooke to manage the affairs of the Granville Inn and Golf Course. Cooke continued in that role until his death in 1951. At that point, Sallie took over the management of both facilities.

Financial issues began a slow but inevitable spiral in the late 1960s and '70s. Rob Drake, an attorney and Granville resident, attributes the financial failure of Sallie's holdings to the fact that she was a disinterested businessperson. Her passions lay elsewhere, specifically with her horses and with theater. The sale of the Granville Golf Course was the first piece of "empire" that Sallie released, most likely under duress caused by

general business and financial factors. But that sale was at least voluntary. Later, the farm and the Inn were sold at sheriff's sale as a part of foreclosure actions.

Newspaper articles from the summer of 1976 in both the *Columbus Dispatch* and the *Newark Advocate* report Sallie's being tried in Licking County Common Pleas Court on seven counts of passing bad checks. In August of 1976, Sallie was convicted of five felonies for writing bad checks of more than \$150 each and on two misdemeanor counts for checks of less than \$150. The verdict carried a penalty of six months to five years in prison. The sentence, however, was suspended and Sallie was placed on probation for one year. In January of 1977 the court determined that Sallie had conducted herself in such a manner that supervision was no longer necessary, and Sallie was released from probation.<sup>9</sup>

Sallie realized herself to be a woman who was 64 years old with Renaissance interests and talents in a business world that demanded more than a cursory attention to stocks and ledgers. She attributed the



**Sallie in competition clearing a fence with her hunter, "Espionage."**

decline of her holdings to an "age of mediocrity" in which she found herself. She continued, "People just can't afford to do anything anymore. Elegant living is gone, and I don't think the decline is going to stop."<sup>10</sup>

In 1976 the mansion itself was foreclosed upon and sold to satisfy Sallie's outstanding debts. "I love Bryn Du," Sallie said, "but I'll be damned if I'll go to my grave worrying about it. This was built as a magnificent house, and it has to be run that way. It just costs too much today. Maintenance is so high, and you just can't run a place like this with third-rate people."<sup>11</sup>

The final step was a sale of the home's contents, which included silver, cut glass, and Oriental rugs with a total appraisal value of \$250,000. One room-sized, antique Tabriz prayer rug alone was valued at \$15,000. Other treasures included a 220-piece silver service which was a wedding gift to Sallie's mother and was engraved with the royal coat of arms of the

House of Orange. The mansion, which had played host to Presidents Taft, Harding and Coolidge, where Leontyne Price once sang, where the Steinways were played by Paderewski and Rachmaninoff, and where Lillian Gish and Katherine Cornell had relaxed over tea, slipped through Sallie's fingers.<sup>12</sup>

Sallie seemingly took the loss of her home and its treasures in her characteristic stoic manner. She remarked that she was through with Ohio and that no one cared about her except as something to talk about.<sup>13</sup>

Following the loss of Bryn Du, Sallie moved to a 17-acre farm in Middleburg, Virginia with her long-time companion Jane Dunscombe, where she continued to raise and show horses. Of that move, Rob Drake commented, "Somehow she managed after leaving Granville to keep many facets of her rather expensive lifestyle fully polished!"

Sallie died on November 27, 1998 following a

short illness. She was 86 years old. Alan Balch, AHSA president, delivered the eulogy at her memorial service. He described her as "inimitable, irascible, articulate, eloquent, entertaining, bombastic, theatrical, musical, poetic, confrontational, intellectual and even glamorous." He went on to say, "Clearly, power and big-time wealth did not intimidate Mrs. Sexton. She would cast that particular spell of hers on a whole crowded room, the bigger the audience the better, from seedy motel to the Plaza ballroom, and she could probably have held a nation captive. We latter-day so-called leaders are just pipsqueaks by comparison."<sup>14</sup>

Sallie Jones Sexton lived as she wished to live and stayed true to herself throughout her life. It is difficult to document the life of a legend. Of the many stories that live in collective memory but lack firm documentation is one that seems to perfectly capture the essence of Sallie's indomitable spirit and her irreverent wit. It involves a traffic stop. Sallie, the story goes, was speeding toward Columbus when she was pulled over by a highway patrolman. In those days, fines were levied and paid on the spot. When the officer informed Sallie of the cost, she gave him double the amount. In response to his surprise, Sallie replied, "You know I'll be coming back through here in a few hours, so I thought I'd save us both some time and trouble."

Sallie Jones Sexton was a woman truly to the manor born.

### **Bryn Du today**

An advisory election was held in November 2002 in the Village of Granville to determine public opinion regarding the purchase of Bryn Du. Sixty two percent of the voters in the Village of Granville supported the property purchase. The Village purchased the property on December 16, 2002. Granville Township government contributed money from its open space fund representing the purchase price of half of the front field (16.12 acres) to preserve it as greenspace. Today the mansion and its grounds belong to the Village of Granville and serve as a venue for art and flower shows, weddings, meetings, lectures, high school proms, polo matches on the great lawn, and trade shows.

In 2014 *The Granville Sentinel* and the *Newark Advocate* carried an article alleging that Sallie's ghost lingers in the mansion. Bruce Cramer, director



**Sallie was recognized for her years as Master of the Foxhounds of the Rocky Fork Headley Hunt.**

of Bryn Du, said that United Paranormal Project's ghost hunts are a reliable fundraising source for the village-owned property. Still, he hesitated to defend the claim that Sexton may yet be haunting the halls of her old home. "Sallie has never tapped me on the shoulder, let me put it that way," Cramer said. But he added later, "Even if there is a ghost, I'm not sure it would be her," noting that many other people had lived in the mansion.<sup>15</sup>

### **SOURCES**

The author is grateful to several people who provided valuable assistance in researching this article including Bruce Cramer and Athena Koehler at the Bryn Du Mansion; Theresa Overholser and Tom Martin at the Granville Historical Society; Judy Donald, archivist at Choate Rosemary Hall; and staff at the Licking County Court of Common Pleas. Important sources of first-person memories were Rob Drake, Laura Bracken, and Marilyn Sundin. A special note of thanks is due to Lyn Boone for her counsel and advice.

Documentation of this article proved challenging. Some information was taken from xeroxed pages in the archives of Bryn Du and the Granville Historical Society, and in some instances citations penciled on



Polo is still played today on the Great Lawn of the Bryn Du Mansion, an echo of its past glory and its famous daughter.

the sources were incomplete. For that reason, I am placing my research materials on file in the archives of GHS. The sources include an article from the *Columbus Monthly* magazine most likely written at the time of the sale of Bryn Du; various articles from both the *Columbus Dispatch*, the *Columbus Star*, the *Columbus Business Forum*, the *Newark Advocate*, and *The Granville Sentinel*; several articles from *The Chronicle of the Horse*; an article from *SPUR* (magazine); an article from the *Columbus Business Forum*; and pages from the yearbooks of Rosemary Hall and Bryn Mawr, which are cited in the body of the text.

Additionally, I viewed two DVDs that are also on file at GHS. The first is a recording of a re-enactment of Sallie and her parents reflecting on their lives at Bryn Du with local actors portraying the family members. The second is a recording of a presentation Sallie made in Naples, Florida in her later years. Neither DVD is dated, but both are available to those who might be interested in viewing them.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>McClung, Cooky, "When Sallie Sexton Talks, People Have to Listen:"; *The Chronicle of the Horse*, March 20, 1996, p.56.

<sup>2</sup>A variety of electronic sources provided the

general background information on Sallie's family, her childhood, and their home at Bryn Du: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bryn\\_Du\\_Mansion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bryn_Du_Mansion); <http://granvilleinn.com/the-history-of-the-granville-inn/>; [http://www.granville.oh.us/granville\\_culture\\_and\\_heritage/](http://www.granville.oh.us/granville_culture_and_heritage/)

<sup>3</sup>*Columbus Star*, June 19, 1965

<sup>4</sup>Carter, Janet. Sallie Sexton, *SPUR*, September 1977, p. 78.

<sup>5</sup>McClung, *op. cit.* p. 57.

<sup>6</sup>The full text of the *Bryn Mawr Almanac* for 1934 is available online at [http://repository.brynmawr.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1028&context=bm\\_c\\_yearbooks](http://repository.brynmawr.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1028&context=bm_c_yearbooks)

<sup>7</sup>McClung, *op.cit.* p. 59.

<sup>8</sup>*Columbus Business Forum*, July 1969, p.10.

<sup>9</sup>Records of Licking County Common Pleas Court proceedings on file at the Licking County Court House in Newark, Ohio.

<sup>10</sup>Marsh, Betsa, The Saga of Sallie Jones Sexton, *Columbus Monthly Magazine*, undated clipping in the archives of the Granville Historical Society, p. 73.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.* p. 75.

<sup>12</sup>*Columbus Dispatch*. September 26, 1976.

<sup>13</sup>Betsa, *op.cit.*, p. 79.

<sup>14</sup>*Chronicle of the Horse*. November 1998. Xerox copy in the archives of Bryn Du.

# An Abbreviated, Somewhat Anachronistic, Rhyming History of the Alexandrian Bank

By ARNIE JOSEPH

So, old Jeremiah goes to buy a bank

As money changer

He's a stranger

To the danger of his wager.

He pays no heed

To need or greed

And adds a bunch of stuff to read.

Success is less and less

Ending in a fiscal mess.

The bank did tank.

If only he'd had a second look

To learn: you can't make a buck

From lending a book.

The war left business in a hole

And poor Luke Walpole on the dole.

Then Sammy Bacon's cabinet making

Saved the place from mortgage breaking;

And Hezekiah's general store

Didn't do whole lot more

But the people in town

All came out

To greet and shout

"Hyah Hezekiah!"

Not till 1848 did Rufus Fosdick and his  
mate

Paint their names on Granville's slate

Such names evoke the histories

Of men's unsmiling, bearded faces

And ladies bonnets bound in laces

Transport us to unsolved mysteries.

Oh, ok, I'll stop forthwith

Except for a rhyme to

Lucretia Bragg Smith

*Poem was written by Denison Professor Emeritus of French Arnold Joseph, reacting to Lyn Boone's "Built for the Ages" biography of the Alexandrian Bank/Historical Society building featured in the most recent edition of The Historical Times.*

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## SHIPLEY TO CLAMP DOWN ON VIOLATORS

### Arrest Will Be Fate Of Those Who Turn in Middle of Block

Marshal Joe Shipley announces that beginning today, he will arrest and hale into

court offending drivers who persist in turning between intersections. The new traffic ordinance went into effect Dec. 3 and since that time Shipley has been merely warning those who infringe upon the rulings.

Shipley is also on the lookout for motorists who are still using 1926 auto tags. He has been warning all those with old license plates so far this week, but in the future intends to arrest all who have not placed new tags on their cars.

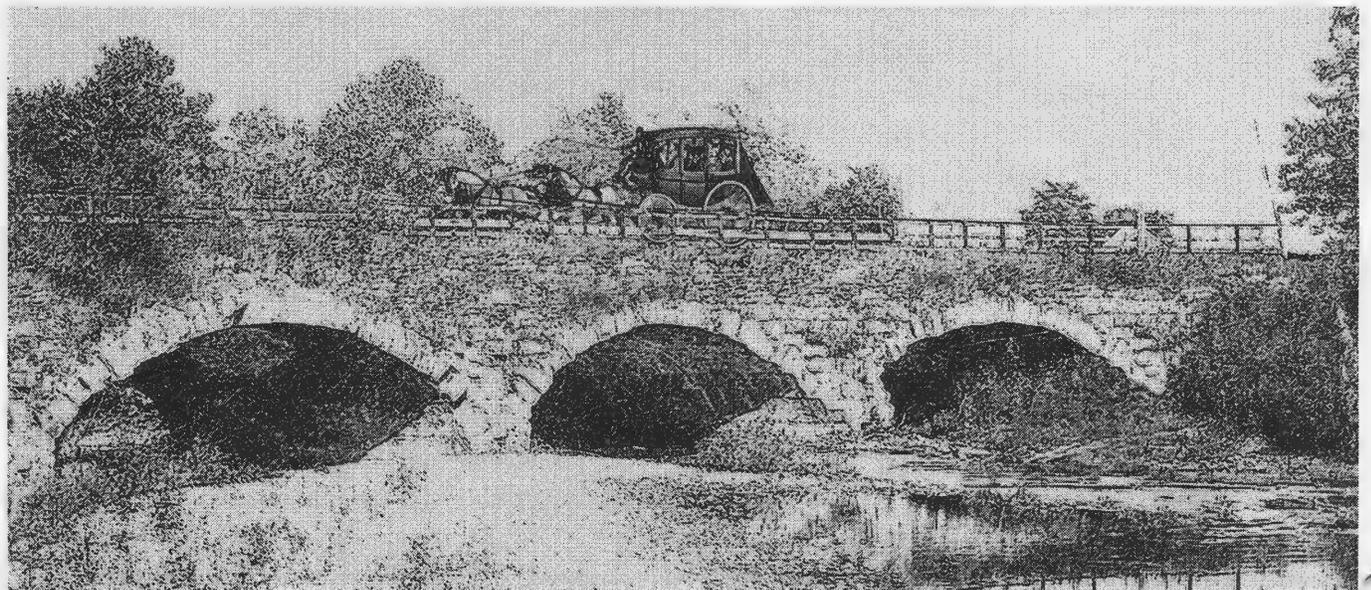
— From a 1927 *Granville Times*.

# Showman's Arch evolves with the times

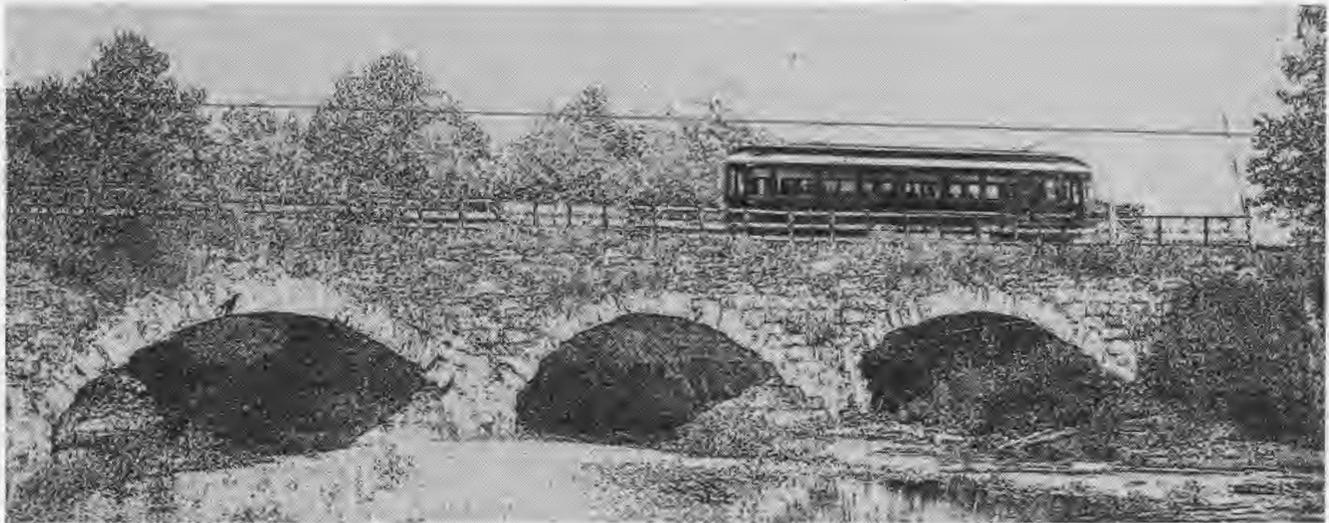
The builders of the Ohio and Erie Canal needed additional water at the highest point of the new canal --Licking County -- and most notably built Buckeye Lake as a freshwater source. They also built five "feeders" in Ohio, one running 6.1 miles between the actual canal in Newark and the end of Clouse Lane in Granville. The feeder had to cross Raccoon Creek at some point and planners chose a location on what is now Cherry Valley Road just north of today's Reddington Road for an aqueduct, using land from the Showman farm. Its foundations are made of wood, which has been protected from decay since the original construction by staying under water. Following its construction in 1832, the aqueduct became a bridge for all of the forms of ground transportation in the history of Licking County. Thanks to Lynne Overholser for the renderings on these pages.



**The aqueduct as opened in 1833 to accommodate canal boats and the towpath.**



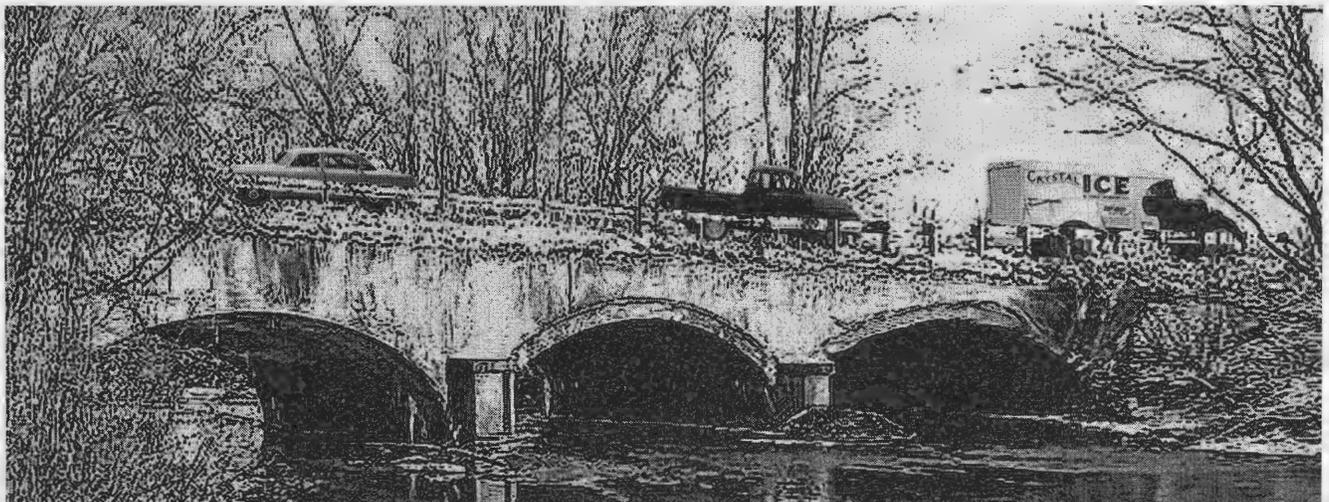
**By 1861 the canal was defunct, a victim of the next form of transportation, the railroads. It became Showman's Arch, and the early traces of Cherry Valley Road -- then called Hebron Road -- crossed it. The Granville Chariot, a twice daily stagecoach that ran between Granville and Newark benefited.**



**In 1890 the newest form of transportation in the area, the Interurban Electric Railway, began using the Arch and did so until its demise in 1923.**



**After the Interurban era was over, a bus line used the Arch. The original stonework was later faced.**



**Today, Showman's Arch is an almost invisible part of Cherry Valley Road near the intersection with Reddington Road -- one needs to drive on Reddington Road to get a perspective. A future extension of Thornwood Drive will necessitate a new bridge.**

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### **GET CONNECTED, JOIN THE SOCIETY**

The Granville Historical Society is an all-volunteer, non-governmental not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization with membership open to all. Joining the Society is a delightful way to meet people who share a love of and interest in Granville's rich, well-documented history. Monthly programs, quarterly publications, and a museum that is open five days a week during the season are some of the ways that enable Society volunteers to share facets of what makes Granville so fascinating with members and guests. Volunteers are welcome in the Archives and Museum Collections areas, as well as museum hosts.

Please visit [Granvillehistory.org](http://Granvillehistory.org) for further information about all that we do and how you can get involved.

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