



# THE HISTORICAL TIMES

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## Granville, George Jones and *The New York Times*

*Times* co-founder spent boyhood years in Granville

By WAYNE PIPER

There is among the three items listed in the title of this article a connection that may not be immediately familiar to many people who live in Granville or to those conversant with village history. And no, this is not an article about a concert given by a country western singer sometime in the distant past. Rather it is the little-known story of a boy who lived briefly in Granville and who later in life left an indelible mark on American journalism.

George Jones was born in 1811. In 1822 when he was just 11 years old his parents, John and Barbara Jones, moved to Granville from their home in East Poultney, Vermont. Accompanying them was George's older brother Richard and his wife Laura. John and Richard set up a woolen mill in the Welsh Hills in the vicinity of what is now the intersection of Welsh Hills and Sharon Valley roads. Their enterprise was troubled from its earliest days because the water source needed to power the mill wheel wasn't dependable enough to work with regularity. The family faced more tragedy when John and Barbara died in 1824 within a month or two of each other. Nowadays the cause of death would be listed as dysentery.

After his parents' death, George's brother and his wife remained in Granville and tried to eke out a living from the woolen mill, but it was tough going for them. They decided to send George back to Vermont to be raised by another brother. As George



George  
Jones

grew older he began work in a general store where he became friends with a young man named Horace Greeley. Both young men were talented and ambitious and had goals that extended far beyond spending the rest of their lives working in a general store.

Horace Greeley moved to New York City where

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**Wayne Piper is a member of the Granville Historical Society Board of Managers, is chair of its Publicity Committee and a member of the Publications Committee.**

he founded a paper he named *The New York Tribune* and, as many people know issued a famous admonition to young men of the time to head west. George, however, headed southeast from Vermont and went to work for Greeley at the *Tribune*. There he met another young man named Henry Raymond. Although they received a solid background in journalism from Greeley, the young men ultimately decided to strike out on their own to found their own newspaper which they first called *The New York Daily Times*. The first issue was published on September 15, 1851. After some consideration – perhaps because the title seemed too long for the paper's masthead – George and Henry decided to drop the word “Daily,” and the paper became what we still know today as *The New York Times*.

The paper flourished, but George met with an unexpected challenge when his business partner Henry died in 1869, and George became the sole publisher of the *Times*.

Readers familiar with American history in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century will remember that era in New York City as pretty rough and tumble – an environment which provided more challenges for Jones and his paper. There was brazen corruption at the hands of “Boss” Tweed and the machine run by his gang at Tammany Hall. They had a hand in every nefarious aspect of city operations. George, whose moral compass reflected that of the good people who had raised him in Vermont and Ohio, had the temerity to refuse to bow down to Tweed. Even when Tweed offered to buy George off for millions of dollars, the paper continued its editorial campaign against Tammany Hall. Ultimately, *The New York Times* was largely responsible for Tweed's undoing.

Although he achieved lasting success in the world of publishing, George never forgot his Granville heritage. He erected two of the largest and most elaborate monuments in The Old Colony Burying Ground which stand in memory of George's parents and his sister-in-law, Laura, who died when cholera swept the village in 1834. She was only 36 years old. Carved in sandstone sometime in the 1860s, they were at the time among the finest monuments in the cemetery.

The monument to Jones' parents bears this inscription:



**Wayne Piper portrayed George Jones in the 2017 Old Colony Burying Ground Walking Tour.**

Underneath  
in Hope of a joyful  
Ressurrection are deposited  
the Remains of John Jones,  
Deacon who departed  
this life on the 8<sup>th</sup> day of June 1824  
in the 62 year of his age.

Also of Barbara, wife  
of the said John Jones  
She departed this life on  
the 29<sup>th</sup> day of July 1824  
in the 61 year of her Age.

Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from  
henceforth Yea saith the Spirit that they may  
rest from their labours and their works do follow  
them.

Rev. Ch. 14 Ver. 13.

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# Cool Old Stuff



**SKINNY DIPPING:**  
Around 1900 bathing suits were optional at a popular swimming hole on Raccoon Creek outside of Granville. The exact location of this spot is not recalled.

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The monument to Jones' sister-in-law, Laura, bears this inscription:

Erected  
to the Memory of  
Laura R. Jones  
who died January  
22 1834  
in the 36  
Year of her  
Age

Pure as the fountain from which springs its being  
Thy spirit hath fled to the land of the blest  
Untainted and freed from thy earthly dwelling  
Now go to thy Maker sweet pilgrim and rest.

George Jones died on August 11, 1891, five days before his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. He is interred in Sleepy Hollow Cemetery in Sleepy Hollow, New York.

*The author thanks Dick Daly, Theresa Overholser, and Lyn Boone for their research supporting this article.*

## **Editors' Note**

This issue of *The Historical Times* is the second edition in volume/year 32 of the publication's existence. Previous issues, both on the front and back pages, incorrectly stated volume number.



**This is one of the earliest photos of the Opera House in its role as the First Baptist Church at the southwest corner of Broadway and Main Street. The building was moved between 1880 and 1882 across the street when it became the Opera House. The photo was taken shortly before the move was made.**

# Interior of Baptist church, pre-Opera House, described in detail

*Editors' note: This Nov. 9, 1933 article is from the Granville Times, published during the week of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the "new" stone First Baptist Church, which stands today under the name of the United Church of Granville on the southwest corner of the Main Street/Broadway intersection. Headlined "The Old Baptist Church," this article turns up at a convenient time, a nice accompaniment to the Granville Historical Museum's current exhibit on the*

*Opera House. The article describes in detail the interior layout of the older Baptist church on both its main floor and in the basement, prior to the structure being moved across the street, becoming the Opera House, on the southeast corner of East Broadway and North Main.*

The Granville Baptist Church is celebrating during the coming week the fiftieth anniversary of the occupancy of its present stone meeting house.



**The Opera House building is pictured as the First Baptist Church at in its original location, during the decade of the 1870s.**

## **Opera House exhibit continues**

The Opera House exhibit in the Granville Historical Museum, 115 E. Broadway downtown, continues this summer in the Robinson Research Center room of the museum. Photos and history of the structure, from its start as the meeting house of the First Baptist Church in 1849 through the destructive Opera House fire in 1982, are included along with artifacts.

### **MUSEUM HOURS**

**--July-August: Thursday, Friday and Sunday 1-3 p.m. and Saturday noon to 4 p.m.**

**--September: Saturday noon to 4 p.m. and Sunday 1-3 p.m.**

From Nov. 10, 1849, until this building was begun, the congregation worshipped in a frame structure which, half a century ago, was moved across the street to a vacant part of the town common and, with some modifications, has served the community since as the town hall and theater.

Originally it stood on the southwest corner of the common, its front on the building-line for the south side of Broadway, its main door facing that of the Presbyterian church on the north side, a walk running from one to the other. The building was 53 feet wide by 72 feet long, its second-story auditorium seating 550 persons. This main meeting-room was reached by a broad flight of steps on the outside of the building which approached an entry, from which five doors opened. Three of these, a large central door and two side ones provided admission into the church proper. The other two, one at each end of the entry, led to stairways to the choir balcony which was directly over the entry.

The pews were made of walnut and were of colonial pattern. They faced toward the south end of the room where the pulpit stood and were grouped in six sections. A short section against the east wall ended at an aisle; then came a double section; then the wider center aisle; then another double section,

and aisle, and another short section against the west wall. On either side of the pulpit platform there were pews facing it and so at right angles to those already mentioned. Each of these groups was known as "the amen corner". The one on the east side was used by the "sem girls" from the Young Ladies' Institute; the other, ordinarily, was occupied by Denison men students. The pews in the meeting-house were individually owned and were transferred by deed, just as if they were parcels of land.

The pulpit platform, which faced toward the north and the center aisle, included in its plain furniture a box-like structure behind which the minister might stand, with another smaller box upon it, upon which rested the Holy Bible. On either side of this were square pillars, unadorned, used as supports for tall coal-oil lamps. Directly behind the pulpit, underneath the platform was a baptistry. When the ordinance of baptism by immersion was observed, there was quite a ceremony of preparation by the deacons, as they removed the furniture mentioned, took up the carpet, opened up the flooring, and so made available the tank whose water, in cold weather, was heated with much difficulty. The minister and those who shared the ordinance went down to the baptistry and out of it



**This 1980 photo of the interior of the Granville Opera House auditorium shows how the building retained the balcony that was present when the structure served its original purpose as the First Baptist Church, 1849-1880. This photo was donated to the Granville Historical Society by Jan Packard, a retired fire-fighter who took the photos following the 1980 fire caused by a lightning strike.**

in full view of the congregation, which usually, on such occasions, filled the house.

As the minister preached from his pulpit he looked straight down into the emptiness of the broad center aisle toward the main door, being compelled to turn to the right or to the left to see any of his congregation. The choir, in the balcony over the entry and facing toward the south, could not be seen by the worshippers, unless the latter turned face-about to look. A large chandelier, in the center of the room fitted with coal-oil lamps helped to hide the singers from the pastor in the pulpit. At night further light was provided by similar lamps held in brackets on the side walls.

Stove heat, in time, gave way to some sort of a furnace. There was no ventilation, except as the sexton, skillfully balancing a long pole on his hand, distracted the attention of the worshippers from time to time by stalking down the side aisles to lower the large windows from the top.

Down stairs, under the auditorium there was a center door on the east side of the building. Through

this door, stepping down a few inches, one came into a small entry, with perhaps three doors. The north one led to the "church parlors", the main room which, for years, was the domain of Mrs. Laura O. Parsons — "Aunty Parsons" everyone called her — where she had charge of the "infant department" of the Sunday School. The center door opened into the sexton's room, where he kept his brooms and other utensils and made the fire. The south door led to a good-sized auditorium, perhaps 40 feet wide by 50 feet long. At first this was seated with pews, although later, chairs were substituted. It was the prayer-meeting room, at a time when the prayer-meeting was a real factor in the spiritual life of the church, the young folks assembling on Tuesday evening and the older ones on Thursday. There, too, the covenant-meeting was held on the day before communion Sunday, when every member of the church was expected to be present. In times of revival meetings, which marked almost every winter, beginning with the "week of prayer", seats were at a premium, and the songs of the church



**The lower doors of the former First Baptist Church are pictured in a photo of the Opera House interior taken by then-Licking County Clerk of Municipal Court Bob Hill.**

were sung with great fervor and enthusiasm by large congregations. It was in this room that Mr. and Mrs. N. S. Burton established the Young Ladies' Institute.

Outside, the church was painted white. Plainly visible from the surrounding hills, it was a conspicuous landmark for years. The citizens of Granville raised \$800 for a town clock to be placed in the square tower, this still further emphasizing the importance of the building. After they had moved the house to its present site the township trustees soon changed the color of the paint. They added a section on the south, to provide stage facilities and make more income-producing rooms; but it is easily possible to visualize the original size, the line of (the) addition being plainly seen.

The new church, the first in Granville to illustrate the cruciform type, with its many improved features of church construction, developed since 1849, its more advanced methods of seating, and its greatly increased facilities, soon made people forget the building. But many memories might be recalled: of college commencements for nearly a quarter of a century, of famous orators in the college lecture course, of varied entertainments in music or art, of stirring revival period, or of the ordinary Sabbath services and the devoted ministry of faithful souls.

— *Fernald Rhoades*



**A fireman uses a ladder truck to battle the 1982 blaze that destroyed the Opera House. Photo is by Dr. Robert Raker.**

GRANVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
115 E. Broadway  
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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.

The Granville Historical Society  
P.O. Box 129, Granville, OH 43023  
740-587-3951

[GranvilleHistorical@gmail.com](mailto:GranvilleHistorical@gmail.com)  
[www.granvillehistory.org](http://www.granvillehistory.org)

Granville History Museum and Robinson  
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