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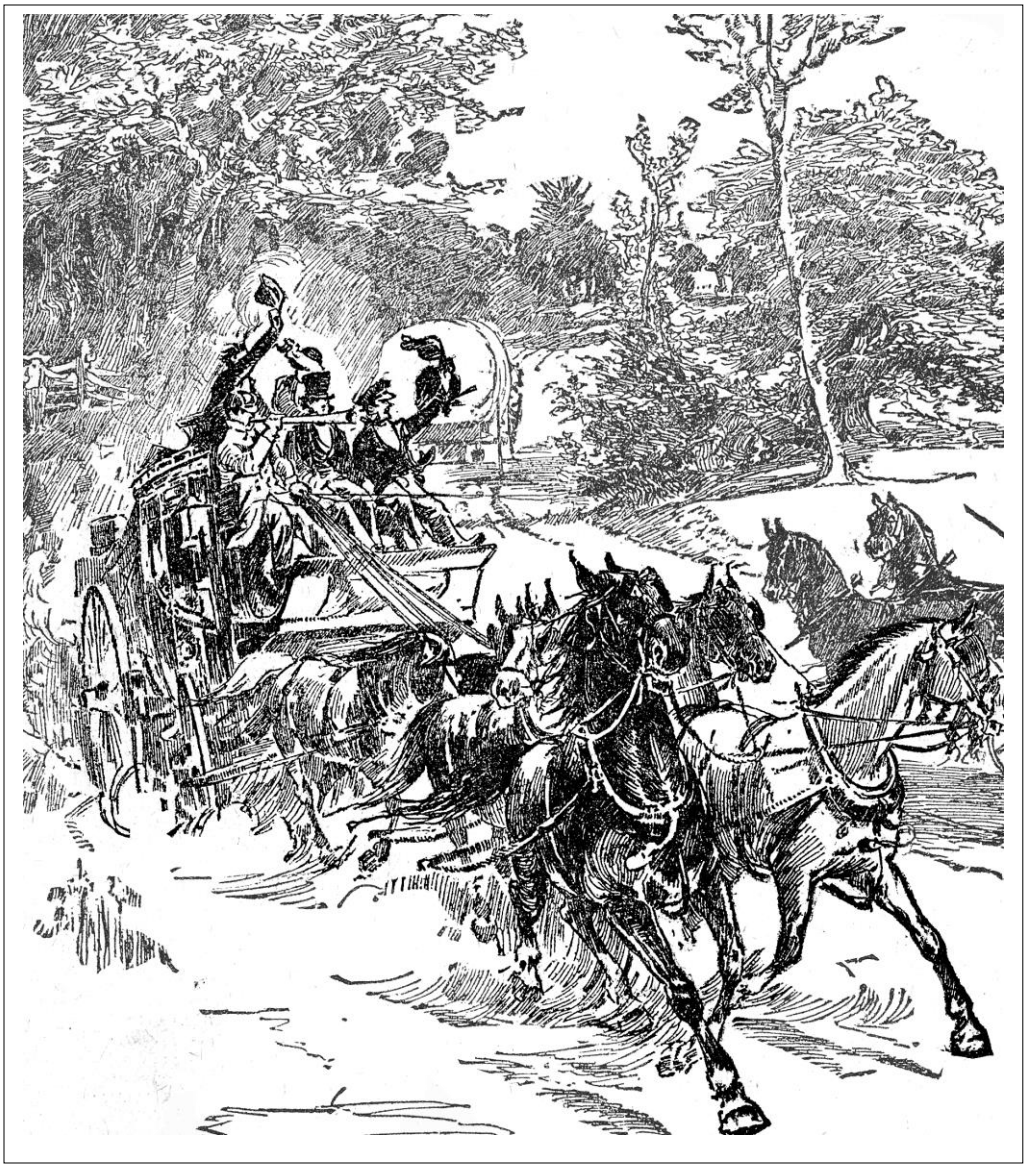
Sam Sheldon's American Journey

A true story, as told in his letters home to Granville



By THERESA OVERHOLSER

EDITOR'S NOTE: Words in *Italics* are Sam Sheldon's own. Punctuation has been standardized.

Sam Sheldon is about to die.

If he must die, he thinks, at least his last sight of earth is pleasant. *So ever in his vision shall that memory dwell.* To the East, gentle verdant hills gather at the feet of dark mountains. To the West, the Rio Grande flows silver in the evening light, smoke from his comrades' campfires rising gracefully from the tree shelter along its banks. Momentarily he is lulled by the beauty.

But now comes the ominous thwick of arrows pulled from quivers, the click of firelocks, as his Pueblo and Mexican captors range around him, aiming for his heart. Then b*urning thoughts and kind remembrances dash quick as lightning flashes across the soul, most indeed saddning, but some soothing.* His brother; his sisters; his mother *widowed and worn with griefs. 'Twould break her heart.* Would they ever know what became of him?

Samuel Bosworth Sheldon, thirty years old in that October of 1841, is a long way from his home and friends in Mississippi, farther still from his family in Granville, Ohio, and a lifetime away from

his birthplace, Southampton, Massachusetts.

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A Promising Youth

Sam Sheldon's journey through America began prosaically enough in 1811 in tiny Southampton, Massachusetts, home to 168 families. One who was familiar with Southampton in the 1810s would scarcely have been able to single him out as anything other than the blacksmith's second son. A few, perhaps, would mark his precocious and personable nature, seeing him as a future teacher or a minister tending a small New England flock. Indeed, the Congregational Church in town was the setting of Sam's earliest memory: a catechism recitation, and *the voice of Mr. Gold* (Rev. Vinson Gould) *as I stand with other children along the aisle of the old church—"We will commence at that little boy yonder."* The first, simplest question was likely "Who are you?" The answer a weighty "I am a child of God." Sam, age three, *was proud of my attainments in the catechism and somewhat chagrined I believe because, in having the first question put to me I lost the opportunity of showing off my accomplishments.*

Sam's family lived in a two-story brick house on the road leading south out of town. The smithy was nearby and outbuildings housed a horse, two or three cows, a pig, and small flocks of sheep and chickens. The family included his father, Paul Warner Sheldon; his mother, Deborah Bosworth Sheldon; older siblings Paul and Deborah (Debbe); Sam; and younger siblings Alvanus and Ann. Both the Sheldons and the Bosworths had lived in and around Southampton for several generations, giving Sam a host of aunts, uncles, and cousins nearby.

In Sam's memories his early childhood was joyously free. He loved Southampton, *her mountains and her hills, and her rocks and her running brooks,* which he wandered with his companion Dick (Sereno Dickinson) Clark, padding barefooted along the dusty dirt roads through green and golden summers. In the winter he was *an excellent navigator of a sled,* flying down the snowy hill behind the Clark home. He was not above using his pleasant nature to charm an extra favor from his mother from time to time. *By my oddities I used to attempt to divert you from your purpose when you were about giving me a deserved flogging; on Sunday when I chose not to go to church I would go off up stairs get into the old oaken cradle, and when you came to look for me affect to be profoundly sleeping, at which you would say "poor dear thing it seems a pity to wake him" and so turn and leave me.*

Sheldon's Massachusetts boyhood was filled with "mountains, hills, rocks and running brooks," according to his own writings.

Samuel was very close to his mother, but one of his most touching memories, told many years later, was of his father. *By the chimney corner, and in the old house back yonder, sits my father, saw sawing on his old fiddle. It is winter, and early morning; day has not yet dawned—he could not sleep through the long night, and so has sent the tones of his violin a down these fifty years.*

Deborah Bosworth, petite, dark-eyed, and lively, with a love of dancing, was a young woman of 18 when she married 21-year-old Paul Warner Sheldon in 1805. Together over the next 14 years they had seven children, two of them daughters who died in infancy. And together, through inheritance and hard work, they accumulated several small parcels of land in Southampton. But in the winter of 1819-1820 something must have gone awry in their financial outlook. On January 22, 1820 Paul mortgaged five lots of land to his uncle, Silas Sheldon, for $1,500, perhaps to raise cash or to pay off debts. This included the homestead and blacksmith shop. Then tragedy struck the family: Paul and Deborah both became seriously ill and on May 2nd Paul died. Samuel recalled to his mother *all*

This 1954 photo shows the house in which Sheldon lived as a boy in South-hampton, Mass. The house still stands today.

the attending circumstances of my father's death—the sick room, your light enfeebled tread about the dying bed, the hectic flush upon your cheek that even a child as I was I knew was not the bloom of health, your look of utter desolation as you leaned fully forward in your carriage to see the coffin lowered, the low faint wail you uttered as the earth fell rumbling on the coffin lid—the cold icy death like feeling that pressed on my own spirits when we returned again to our desolate hearth, your long protracted illness that followed, and the dark gloom that hung over our family, our separation, my feelings of utter loneliness, the intense anxiety with which I watched the ebb and flow of the tide of your health, and the host of horrid midnight nightmare phantoms that pressed upon my imagination and even haunted my dreams.

Deborah eventually recovered her health to a degree, but the family was shattered. The children seem to have been sent to live with local relatives for a time, and Uncle Silas leased out the brick home to another family. All of Paul and Deborah's possessions were sold except for $240 worth of clothing and personal items, which the Probate Court allowed Deborah to keep. For the next six years the family relied on what Deborah could scrape together and some small contributions earned by the children. Once for a short time Samuel and his mother lived together in *a rickety old framed house; you kept house and I commenced attending Betsey's* (Elizabeth Strong Clark) *school. For myself I recollect of contributing nothing to the concern except two bits (25 cts) which I had earned in mowing like a Turk for Tim Clark one Saturday afternoon. This was a noble effort on your part my mother.*

Thus it must have been with some relief and a great deal of uneasiness that Samuel learned that his mother was going to marry again and would be leaving Southampton early in 1827, taking Sam and his sister Debbe with her. Their destination was Granville, Ohio, where they would join the family of Mr. Martin Root.

A New Family and New Horizons

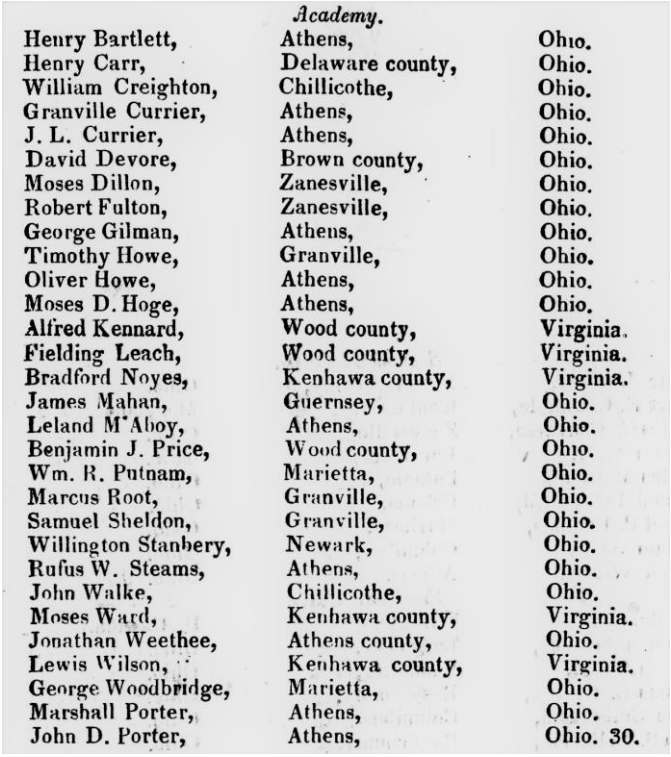
Deborah Sheldon and Martin Root had known one another for many years. Family lore says that there had been an attraction between the two as teenagers, but when Deborah chose to marry Paul Sheldon, Martin, stung by her decision, left the area. In the autumn of 1805 Martin hired on with Timothy Rose of nearby Granville, Massachusetts to travel with a large group of families to their new settlement in central Ohio. As Rose's employee, Martin drove a pair of oxen pulling a wagon laden with the family's belongings, and in the new Granville he helped build the first crude log shelter on the projected village's square. As a member of the Licking Company, the group's official association, he was allotted two 100-acre farms and two town lots.

He chose a parcel on the south side of River Road three miles from town as his homesite, and, in proceeding to clear the hillside, allegedly became the first settler to be bitten by a poisonous copperhead snake. He survived the ordeal.

After the first winter in Ohio, some of the settlers found it necessary to trek back to Massachusetts to escort additional family members west, to attend to legal business, or to pick up supplies, tools, and possessions left behind in the original move. Martin also went back east, in 1807, and when he returned to Ohio he was accompanied by his new wife, Mary Barrett Root, a first cousin of Deborah Sheldon. The couple moved into Martin's cabin on River Road and for the next eighteen years continued to clear the land for farming, planted an apple orchard, and acquired additional acres nearby. By 1825 they had five sons and three daughters and lived in a brick house that still stands on River Road. Unfortunately, near the end of that year both the youngest daughter and Mary died, leaving Martin a widower with children ranging in age from seventeen to three years old. So after mourning Mary for a year, Martin sought out Deborah. They were married in Southampton in mid-January and left Massachusetts the first week of February 1827.

Samuel left no record of how he felt as the diminished family huddled together in Martin Root's sleigh, ready to begin their journey to Ohio. But given his future enjoyment of travel, he must have been captivated by the unfamiliar experience of the ever-changing views and the diverse inns and stopovers on their long trip. Heading northwest to Albany, New York, then west to Buffalo, they would have covered 30-40 miles in a day, weather permitting, roughly following the route of today's U.S. 20 across the state. At Buffalo, Root exchanged the sleigh for a wagon and they turned southwest toward Erie, Pennsylvania and Ashtabula, Ohio. From Ashtabula to Granville the common route was a stair-step south and west through Warren, New Philadelphia, and Coshocton, with stops for rest and refreshment every eight to fifteen miles. The roads varied in quality from smooth to very rough and pitted. Creeks and rivers along the way might not have bridges and so need to be forded, or crossed on ice if the weather was cold enough.

After three weeks and over 700 miles of riding in the open air, the travelers pulled up to the River Road home, cold and weary, and perhaps apprehensive about meeting the Root family. There to greet them were: Marcus, age almost 19 and ready to give up the farming life; Linus, who at nearly 16 was Samuel's age but who was a much larger young man than the slightly-built Sam; quiet Mary, 14; Moses, 12, ready with dry witticisms and scathing comments; plain and good-hearted Martha, 10; Samuel, 7 and Lysander, 5, in need of a mother. By all accounts Deborah would prove to be a kind and caring step-parent to all the children, and Debbe and Samuel to be valued siblings and friends.

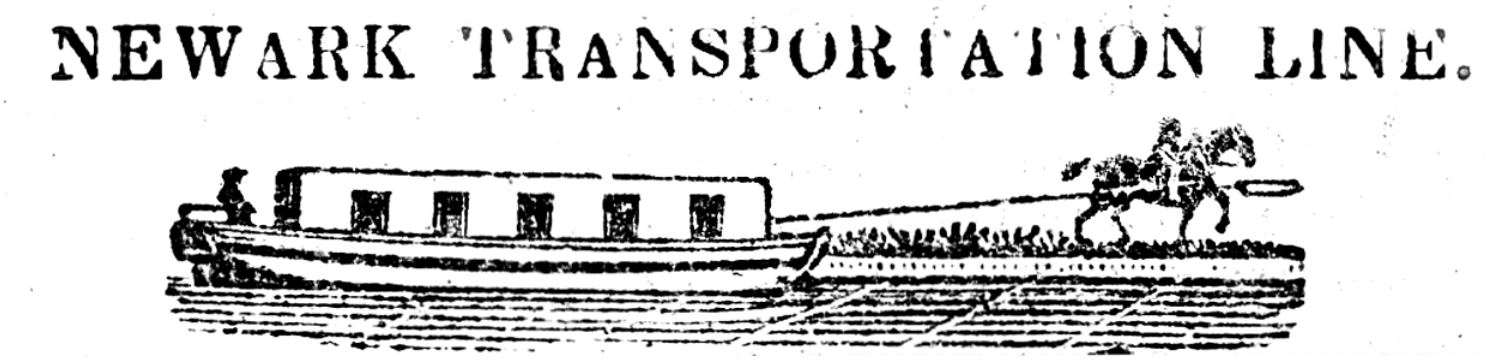


Academy.

Henry Bartlett,	Athens,	Ohio.
Henry Carr,	Delaware county,	Ohio.
William Creighton,	Chillicothe,	Ohio.
Granville Currier,	Athens,	Ohio.
J. L. Currier,	Athens,	Ohio.
David Devore,	Brown county,	Ohio.
Moses Dillon,	Zanesville,	Ohio.
Robert Fulton,	Zanesville,	Ohio.
George Gilman,	Athens,	Ohio.
Timothy Howe,	Granville,	Ohio.
Oliver Howe,	Athens,	Ohio.
Moses D. Hoge,	Athens,	Ohio.
Alfred Kennard,	Wood county,	Virginia.
Fielding Leach,	Wood county,	Virginia.
Bradford Noyes,	Kenhawa county,	Virginia.
James Mahan,	Guernsey,	Ohio.
Leland M'Aboy,	Athens,	Ohio.
Benjamin J. Price,	Wood county,	Ohio.
Wm. R. Putnam,	Marietta,	Ohio.
Marcus Root,	Granville,	Ohio.
Samuel Sheldon,	Granville,	Ohio.
Willington Stanbery,	Newark,	Ohio.
Rufus W. Steams,	Athens,	Ohio.
John Walke,	Chillicothe,	Ohio.
Moses Ward,	Kenhawa county,	Virginia.
Jonathan Weethee,	Athens county,	Ohio.
Lewis Wilson,	Kenhawa county,	Virginia.
George Woodbridge,	Marietta,	Ohio.
Marshall Porter,	Athens,	Ohio.
John D. Porter,	Athens,	Ohio. 30.

Samuel Sheldon and Marcus Root were listed among the students at the Ohio University Academy.

It wasn't long until it was planting season on the River Road farm, and Samuel worked right alongside his step-brothers. In the summer he helped Marcus cut hay and make an enormous stack in one of the fields. That fall they picked apples from their thriving orchard, which in turn produced enough barrels of cider to clear $200. It might have been that profit that allowed Marcus to enroll at the Ohio University Academy, a lower level school attached to the University, to take classes in mathematics, grammar, geography, composition and declamation. And accompanying him to the Academy in Athens in November of 1827 was Samuel, to study Latin. Unfortunately, Marcus fell ill



during the term and the young men returned home in the spring of 1828 without having gained much from their efforts. That year a late spring frost ruined any hopes of another bumper apple crop and another term in Athens.

The blended family was to spend one more year on River Road. In 1829 Martin and Deborah began to sell off various parts of their acreage with an eye to a better farm. They purchased 250 acres on Loudon Street just into McKean Township and began the tedious yet satisfying work of beginning anew in the deeply wooded, fertile Brushy Fork valley. Much later Samuel wrote: *I wonder how the old "Beech Woods" are looking this Spring of my winter of life—more than a generation has come and gone since first as a boy I shot squirrels in its forests yet I remember it as it was…I remember the planting of the orchard trees, the building of the old cabin, the little school where I "Pedagogued" the clearing of the fields, the sugar orchard and the new faces that have since grown up around you.*

With the exception of one term studying at Uncle Silas's "Sheldon English and Classical School" back in Southampton Massachusetts, Samuel stayed on the Loudon Street farm for the next three years while the make-up of the family changed. Alvanus and Ann arrived from Massachusetts in late 1830 and Marcus left home at about the same time. The oldest Sheldon sibling, Paul, moved from New England to Cincinnati and eventually to Granville. Samuel began teaching in a small schoolhouse across Loudon Street from the cabin, where he fondly remembered instructing his step-brothers, calling them *great double-fisted log rollers whom I have helped out of so many brash heaps in arithmetic.*

All the while, Sam was restless; he felt that he should be doing more. There was no acceptable opportunity for further scholarship nearby; the newly opened college in Granville was a Baptist institution, but Sam was a member of the Presbyterian denomination. And because he was a step-son in the family he could not hope for much financial help for college expenses. He would need to strike out on his own soon, to find his own way to more education and a possible career in the ministry or in another learned profession. Then a letter from an old friend gave him a glimmer of a solution to the problem.

Attempting to Move On

The letter was from Miss Eunice Strong, sister of his former teacher, Betsey Strong Clark. Eunice was teaching in Springfield, Ohio, and she had close connections to the Presbyterian Church there. She told Samuel about a newly-opened Presbyterian theological school near Cincinnati: Lane Seminary. She had spoken to Franklin Vail, the seminary's chief fundraiser, regarding Samuel, and Vail was encouraging. Sam should go to Cincinnati and pursue his studies at Lane. Tuition would be no problem because the school was based on the "manual labor" plan, students working several hours a day in agricultural or mechanical jobs at the school to cover that expense. And Miss Strong had another inducement for Sam. According to Vail, the seminary's new head was going to be one of America's most prominent theologians, Lyman Beecher. Beecher was coming from New England to Lane to oversee the doctrinal training of young men who would go out and evangelize. She was anxious to see Sam become one of Beecher's seminarians. She wrote to Sam, "No class of persons needs a brighter constellation of virtues than those who profess to be servants of Christ at the West," confident that he fit the standards.

Samuel waited over a year to follow through. He

was likely trying to save enough money for travel via canal and river to Cincinnati and to pay for a room, meals, and incidentals at Lane, outlays that totaled about $60 for a 40-week session. Finally, in April of 1833 he was ready. He first went to Newark where he spent two days waiting to find a place on a canal boat on which he had *good accommodations pleasant company and a fine passage* to Portsmouth. *In Portsmouth was detained but an hour or two and arrived in Cinti on Monday evening when I saw Dr. Beecher and appeared before the Faculty of Lane Seminary.* And here his planning ran into reality. For some reason the Lane officials, who included Beecher and his future son-in-law Calvin Stowe, did not find Samuel to be a candidate for their seminary. Perhaps his spotty educational background was deficient, even though his ability was proven. Or maybe he did not convince them of his evangelical fervor. One thing is certain: the session that Sam would have joined was already occupied by many well-prepared and ardent men, and had Sam joined them, his life's course might have traveled a far different road than it did. For this class was dominated by the infamous group known as the "Lane Rebels," led by Theodore Weld.

Theodore D. Weld was the natural leader of the students at Lane. He was admired by his classmates as a compassionate man and as a fiery and compelling orator. Weld and a large part of the student body took to heart the movement for the immediate abolition of slavery and for social integration. They put their beliefs before the public in a series of debates held at the school, then carried through to the African-American people of the city by opening schools, a library, and reading classes, and by socializing across racial lines. Their actions so alarmed Lane's trustees, who feared violence and financial retribution toward the school, that they issued severe restrictions on the anti-slavery activity. Fifty-one students rebelled and left, some going home but a significant group going to newly-opened Oberlin College. From there Weld and many others soon began to spread the message of abolition throughout the Midwest, converting many to the cause, including a large part of the population of Granville.

As for Sam, the Lane faculty advised him to go to Miami University instead, which he seemed happy enough to do. At Miami he was *very agreeably situated about three quarters of a mile from College on one of the finest farms I have seen in this western country. Here I room and board. Mr Thompson is my roommate.* Mr. Thompson was Sam's friend from Granville, Thomas McKean Thompson. It is quite possible that the two young men were the first students to attend Miami from Granville. In the University archives Thompson is listed as a junior for that term, while Samuel's name is in a hand-written booklet of students who attended the University, indicating that he paid $10 in tuition.

Towards the end of the term, Sam received a letter from his mother urging him to come home. She wrote that his step-father and his brother Paul also thought that Sam should come home and go into business, and she thought that maybe Sam could make some money selling clocks in the vicinity of Granville. She also indicated that Sam was planning to move on: "it is nesary that you should come and make some preparation before you go to be gon so longue…as for my feelings I cannot be reconciled to have you go away and not see you." Sam was home by the spring of 1834, which became a season of change as well as heartbreak for Deborah. Alvanus, who had only been in Granville a few years, died suddenly in March at age 21. Debbe married neighbor John Pascal Devinney and moved across the road. Ann began teaching school in Muskingum County. And Samuel left for Kentucky.

Going to the South

Sam's reason for going to Kentucky is not readily apparent, but there was a great need for teachers in the state. In fact, there were only enough teachers to serve about a third of school-aged children. Sam traveled to Cincinnati and thence to Louisville where he somehow made the acquaintance of Kentucky's Governor James Morehead, who assisted him in finding a place to teach, and said if he *did not succeed in that place to come and make his house my home and he would get (me) employment some where else.* Morehead *made him a gift of Cicero's Orations, Parley's Moral Philosophy, and a pocket atlas together with other small books that were valuable.*

Sam's new teaching job was in the small village of Franklin, Kentucky, south of Louisville on the road to Nashville, just a few miles north of the Tennessee border. *I expect to open a school here on the 19th of May the people call it Seminary or Academy or some*

other large name…my prospects are encouraging as far as I can judge. I may safely say that it will require much patient labor to establish a good school for I have truly a heterogenious mass of ill shapen timber to commence with. Two months later he was more comfortable with his labors. *I believe on the whole I am more fond of children than formerly. I like their frank ingenuous natures appearing in the laughing eye which looks up wistfully in your face seeming to ask some token of regard. I like the full confidence with which they confide their little joys and sorrows to a friend and the fearless winning earnest with which they entrust little favors.* His employers were urging him to find a female teacher to help in the school and he proposed to his sister Ann that she come take the position. Yet he wasn't sure. *I barely suggest this, no dependence can be placed upon it because it is uncertain whether I myself shall remain after the close of the present session which will take place in about 12 weeks. I have some idea of going to the South.*

Moving on to Mississippi

As Sam was finishing up the school term, several new friends and acquaintances from Franklin were preparing to move their families to Mississippi. They had good motivation to migrate. The cotton-growing states of the deep South had become a place of abundant possibilities for settlers from the Carolinas, Virginia, Georgia, and Kentucky. The land was rich and relatively flat, and the growing season was long. The market for cotton was booming and there was ample opportunity for a family to prosper after a relatively small investment in land and, unfortunately, in enslaved workers. And as the families prospered, so did the necessary professions of business, education, and law. It was logical that an affable, curious, and intelligent man such as Sam would choose to accompany his friends and see what he could make of himself.

However, Sam's mother and sisters didn't appear to see the logic of Sam's choice to go even farther away from them. They must have written to him of their displeasure, for he used a considerable amount of space in his next letters home trying to convince them that all was well. In June of 1835 he wrote to his mother from Madisonville, Mississippi, about 20 miles north of Jackson. *I am afraid you labor under mistaken views with regard to us here; we are not all Barbarians as some have been so liberal as to suppose.* And he attempted to make light of his sister Debbe's worries about his health: *It often gives me pause that my absence should be a source of disquiet to you. "O! That dreadful sickly Mississippi" you will say. You no doubt view my situation in an inhospitable climate and fear its fatal effects on a constitution like mine unused to it.* And then he probably fueled her fussing by mentioning how uncertain life was, how at the time of the sudden death of brother Alvanus the year before *all was bustle and life and health and joy at the very moment death was singling out one of our number—it took him—and left us in tears.*

Sheldon as he appeared during the 1840s. This Daguerreotype photo was probably taken by photographer Marcus Root, Sam's step-brother.

Photo courtesy of George Eastman Museum

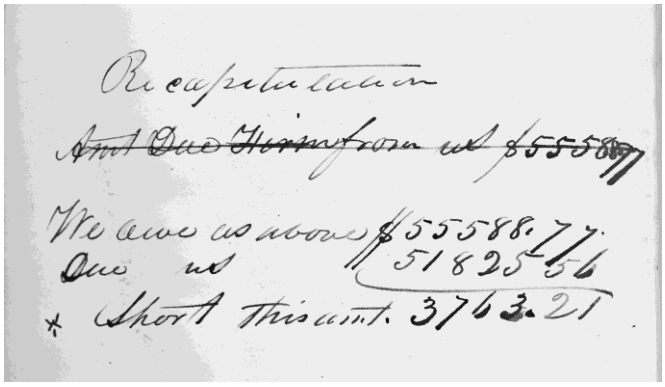
But despite his family's concerns, Sam had found people he was comfortable with, and a place where he felt he could be useful. He taught for another term, and for the moment life was easy. *My school is not large, and the least laborious of any I have taught…My principle amusement when leisure gives opportunity is reading mostly historical works—and sometimes on Sat. my gun or anglerod.*

Soon he was rambling farther afield. In June of 1836 he arrived back in Mississippi from a trip on horseback to New Orleans. *It was my first visit to it—I remained ten days and had an opportunity of almost every variety of scenery from the splendid halls of fashionable life to the silent depositories of the dead—here the small and great sleep together. I witnessed the most outrageous violation of the Sabbath here. On the one I spent, there was a grand military parade of U S troops, Texas and Florida volunteers—even the theatres are open on Sab. Evenings. The oldest houses are the low mostly one story buildings of the Spanish, the French exhibit more taste, the Americans build more expensively than either.* On his way home he lingered on a Sunday in Natchez, spending the afternoon relaxing on a bluff overlooking the Mississippi. *I wished to enjoy my own thoughts in the beautiful view of the river and surrounding country. Hundreds of feet below me rolled in majestic grandeur the grandfather of waters. On its opposite shore the luxuriant corn fields gently stirred to the breeze, while the far-off blue of the horizon was dimpled with here and there small clouds white like snow flakes.*

What Sam did not mention in this letter was that he did not travel for leisure, but rather on business. It seems that friends in Madisonville, the brothers J.R. and Fletcher Hubert, had taken Sam on as a partner of sorts in their mercantile business, probably with the goal of opening a branch store in Canton, the new county seat. Sam went to New Orleans to purchase merchandise from wholesale dealers there and to arrange for its shipment to Madisonville. He dealt under the name of S.B. Sheldon and Co., and ordered such things as silk fabrics, plain cloth, tin ware, combs, saddlery, books, and blankets. His goal would have been to stock the store with everything imaginable that a farm or plantation family might want in the ensuing year. And while the enterprise seemed to be a great opportunity for Sam to learn about business, he would soon find himself the victim of country-wide financial troubles and subsequently on the path that led him to that deadly stand-off in the Rio Grande valley.

Troubled times for everyone

The Hubert brothers' store and hundreds of others in the Deep South dealt primarily with


Recapitulation
Amt Due Hurlbut from us $55588.77
We owe as above $55588.77
Due us 51825.56
Short this amt. 3763.21

This entry from Sheldon's account book shows his loss during the panic of 1837.

cotton- growing farmers in the area. Most of the growers put most of their capital into buying land and enslaved people, and thus had little cash to purchase store goods. So the merchant granted credit at his store based on a farmer's presumed income from the sale of the next season's cotton crop. At the same time, the merchant was buying his own stock from wholesalers, on credit based on the presumed price of cotton the next season. The merchant also served as the facilitator for the sale of the farmers' cotton crops, taking delivery of the product and combining it into shipments to go downriver to the port in New Orleans, where it would be sent to English fabric mills. Obviously, for the whole system to work, the price of cotton had to be stable and more or less predictable.

In 1837, due to many factors both domestic and international, the price paid for cotton dropped. At the same time banks throughout the United States were failing. The resulting financial distress is referred to as the "Panic of 1837," and of course Samuel and his new enterprise were caught solidly in the midst of it. His company's account book for 1837 shows: "We owe $55,588.77, Due us $51,825.56, Short this amount $3,763.21" or somewhere around $110,000 in today's dollars. There was no assurance that the $51,825.56 would ever be paid to him. Almost everyone throughout the area was in the same situation; very few could pay their creditors. The newspapers ran pages full of notices of bankruptcies and sales of assets for debts. Many people who found themselves under financial pressure left town, or the state. And for many, the new Republic of Texas was an attractive opportunity for beginning again because U.S. laws would not apply there. The Huberts chose the Texas option,

Cincinnati Landing.

Sheldon's law school in Cincinnati was a short distance beyond the riverfront buildings depicted above. He would have walked down the hill above to take the river boat back to Mississippi.

and Sam Sheldon went home to Granville, taking his account book with him.

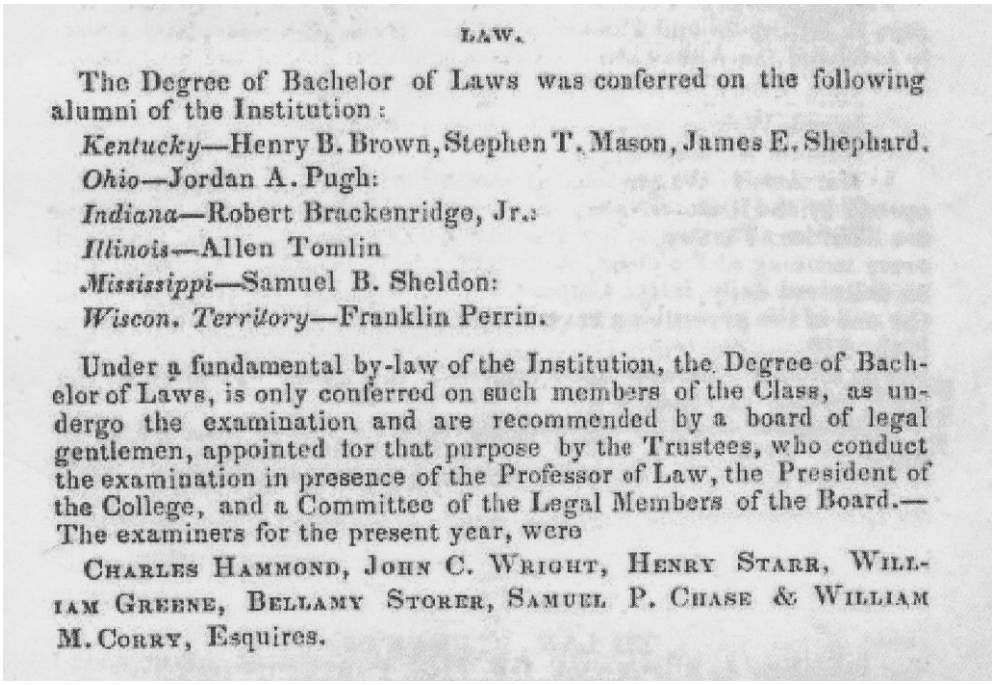
Domestic life in Granville could not hold Samuel for long. He had financial matters to attend to, and he had come up with a scheme to help himself that necessitated a stay of several months in Cincinnati before he returned to Mississippi: he was going to become a student again.

Mid-October found Sam getting a ride from Ann to Hebron, where he would board a stagecoach bound for Springfield via the National Road, today's Route 40. From Springfield he would head south to Cincinnati. *I watched your carriage as it went whirling around the corner from my sight…The stage came into Hebron at five o'clock, very heavily loaded. One figety old Yanky all the way from Boston remonstrated against my going on board. "Why," says I, "my dear sir, it's but a trifle — we risk only one neck apiece. Say driver, my good fellow, will you have my baggage put on board? Halloe there shipmates, you on deck I mean. Admit your humble servant."* Sam clambered up onto the outside seats on the roof *and off we moved, cabin well stowed and six on deck — only six besides the driver. At Columbus we discharged about half our freight and I got a seat inside the stage.* The man from Boston remained aboard *making more fuss than any old gray, complaining of his fare and scolding the driver. I half wished the roads as bad as sometimes I have seen them.*

Once in Cincinnati Sam enrolled in the Law Department of the Cincinnati College, William Holmes McGuffey, president. He took courses in the principles and practices of law, and attended additional lectures including one by Rev. Lyman Beecher on Bible doctrine and another by President McGuffey on mental philosophy. Once he attended a party at the home of the eccentric Dr. Daniel Drake, professor of medicine. There he witnessed an interesting version of the American "stump speech."

We were but a small company for a gentleman's parlor, only one hundred and fifty. Near the corner of the fireplace stood a large buckeye stump. After discussing various matters for an hour or two, dingle, dingle, goes a little bell and the Dr. heralds in a loud voice: Dr. Drake's first speech! Dr. Drake's first speech! And when we are silent the Dr. climbs upon the Buckeye Stump, and begins by saying he has been requested to make a speech on the origin of the Cin. College and then went on to the subject interspersing it with anecdotes and convulsing the house with laughter by his comical remarks. In the course of the evening we had almost every member of the medical faculty perched upon the Stump making little funny speeches.

On March 3, 1838, Samuel B. Sheldon received the degree of Bachelor of Laws, conferred after an examination by a group of eminent Cincinnati lawyers, conducted in the presence of the head of the department and the President of the College. One of his examiners was Salmon P. Chase, who would go on to become Governor of Ohio, United States Senator, U.S. Treasurer, and Chief Justice of



LAW.

The Degree of Bachelor of Laws was conferred on the following alumni of the Institution:

Kentucky—Henry B. Brown, Stephen T. Mason, James E. Shephard.
Ohio—Jordan A. Pugh:
Indiana—Robert Brackenridge, Jr.:
Illinois—Allen Tomlin
Mississippi—Samuel B. Sheldon:
Wiscon. Territory—Franklin Perrin.

Under a fundamental by-law of the Institution, the Degree of Bachelor of Laws, is only conferred on such members of the Class, as undergo the examination and are recommended by a board of legal gentlemen, appointed for that purpose by the Trustees, who conduct the examination in presence of the Professor of Law, the President of the College, and a Committee of the Legal Members of the Board.—The examiners for the present year, were

CHARLES HAMMOND, JOHN C. WRIGHT, HENRY STARR, WILLIAM GREENE, BELLAMY STORER, SAMUEL P. CHASE & WILLIAM M. CORRY, Esquires.

Sheldon's name is listed among the recipients of a Bachelor of Laws degree from Cincinnati College in this bulletin of 1838.

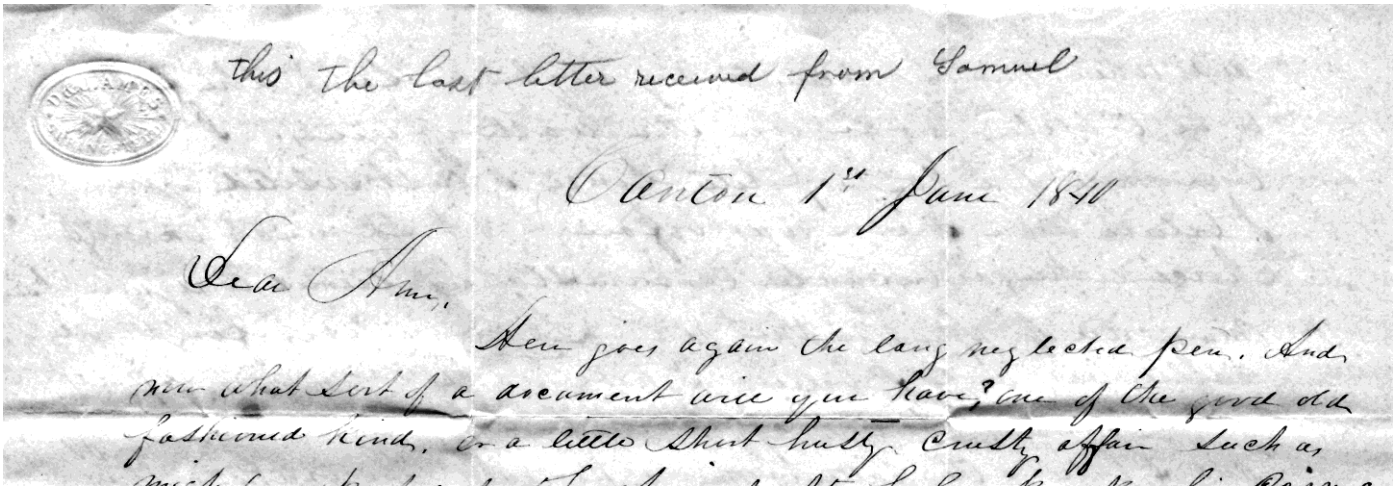
the U.S. Supreme Court.

Sam wasted little time after receiving his degree in going back to Mississippi. He was *occupying an office with a very able lawyer, reading to much advantage…I am getting a very comfortable living helping to set up a business.* He was also traveling again, spending many months at a time in Washington, Republic of Texas. He never mentioned, at least in his surviving letters, exactly what he was doing in Texas. His former partner in the mercantile business, Fletcher Hubert, lived in that area and was accumulating large tracts of land, so it might be that Sam was engaged in Hubert's enterprises. Unfortunately, Hubert was a slave-owner, and if Sam had any involvement in that part of the business, he surely did not mention it to his Yankee family.

In June of 1840 Sam wrote to Ann a strangely wistful letter. *The world has looked on me in jaded coldness, and again nursed me with her sweetest smile—at joyous morn, at busy noon, at lovely twilight eve, and in the still and pensive midnight. Ever the few loved (ones) away off in their quiet home were dearer than all the world. Ever I have felt not alone but one of them, and that whoever else walks with indifference over my grave, a few will weep when I am low.* And penciled at the top of the first page, in Ann's handwriting, are the words: "this the last letter received from Samuel."

TO BE CONTINUED…

Theresa Overholser is a frequent contributor to *The Historical Times* and is the Granville Historical Society's head archivist and a former member of the Board of Managers.



Sheldon's sister Ann Sheldon indicated at the top of this letter to her that it was his last communication for approximately one year.

Granville's oldest photos

This view of the Granville Young Ladies Institute campus is one of the oldest known photos in the village, circa 1868. The campus was located at the corner of West Broadway and Plum Street.

Help us find Memorial Day speeches

The annual Granville Memorial Day program is one of the community's richest traditions. In view of that, the Granville Historical Society has begun a quest to gather copies of keynote addresses made at this program through the years, held at Maple Grove Cemetery.

Led by Historical Society volunteer Chuck Peterson, the effort is to (1) fortify the Society's Granville Memorial Day archives and (2) provide material for a possible "pocket history" book compiling the speeches and other accounts of Memorial Days past.

As of this writing nearly 30 addresses have been found, including several from the most recent years of the tradition and, interestingly, from its earliest years. Peterson said that *The Granville Times*, the community's weekly newspaper from 1880 to 1941, published 14 such addresses in full.

Several have also been found in the Society's archives, and the Denison University archives department is cooperating in the search since several Denison presidents and professors had given the address.

The big challenge is to find addresses mainly in between 1942 and 1990. Granville did not have a newspaper, per se, from 1941 through early 1970, making it difficult to find even press coverage of the programs.

Anyone who can find any of these speeches or knows of family members of the speakers in Newark or Granville who might have copies among family archives should contact the Granville Historical Society at 740-587-3951 or email to granvillehistorical@gmail.com.

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Celebrating its 33rd year of publication by The Granville Historical Society

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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 for further information about all that we do and how you can get involved.

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