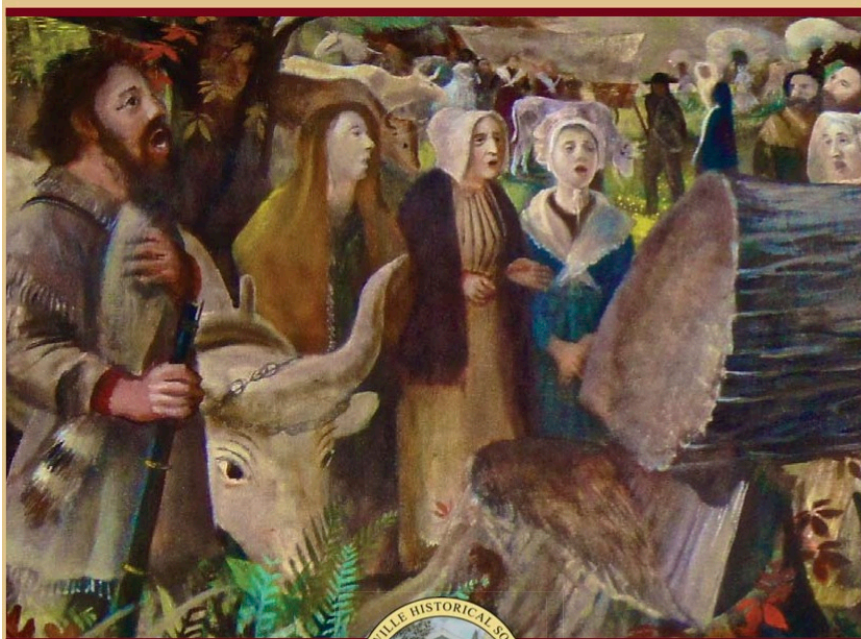


THE FOUNDING OF GRANVILLE, OHIO

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POCKET HISTORY

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TO STROLL THROUGH GRANVILLE, OHIO, in the 21st century is to experience a sense of timelessness. Without a doubt, Granville is a vibrant and modern village, but it's also a place where history feels close at hand, where the 19th century itself might be just around the corner. And this feeling doesn't come just from 200-year-old buildings, but also from the kind of place Granville aspires to be: when Americans imagine the ideal local community of friendly neighbors, independent merchants, Fourth of July parades, ice cream socials, and kids on bikes, the picture they have in mind almost certainly looks a lot like Granville, Ohio.

This sense of closeness to the past might be deceptive, however. Despite the visual similarities, the Granville of today is different from the Granville of the early 1900s, and very different from the Granville of the early 1800s. Some of these differences conform to our preconceptions of life in a 19th-century village, such as the fact that working on a Sunday in Granville in the early 1800s could cause a major scandal. Other differences might surprise a modern observer, such as the fact that early Granville was once a major center of whiskey production whose inhabitants drank some six gallons of hard liquor per capita each year.

The point is: the proverbial time-travelers who strapped into a time machine at the corner of Main and Broadway, setting the destination for 1805, would step out into a radically different society than

the one they left. (They might also step out into a giant sinkhole, since Granville once was pockmarked with deep pits that took several years to fill in; if you get back there, gentle reader of the technologically advanced future, please watch your step.) And if they went back just one year earlier, to 1804, what we now call Granville would be not merely different, but in fact entirely unrecognizable.

So how might we begin to get at a richer understanding of Granville's true changeability, of its long and complicated history of resistance and adaptation to the shifts of the centuries?

We can start by taking in the fact that the oldest man-made structure in Granville is not a building, but an effigy mound constructed by the Fort Ancient people perhaps a thousand years ago. Indeed, the plot of land we now call Granville has been considered, at various times in the past, Spanish territory, then French territory, then British territory, and then, of course, United States territory, but before any of that it was home to Native Americans, from the Ohio Hopewell culture in 200 B.C.E. to the Wyandotte, Shawnee, Delaware, Mingo, and Miami who lived in the area more recently. Even after the expansion of British America into the area, this same plot of land was claimed by Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and the U.S. federal government itself; it has belonged to Bouteau County, Illinois County, Washington County, Ross County, Fairfield County, and now Licking County. And before any of that, these four square miles, home today to some 3600 fairly cosmopolitan moderns, was once part of the greatest deciduous forest on the planet.

That long pattern of change should humble any claim of timelessness by our little village. Nonetheless, the founding of Granville in 1805 does represent a significant and decisive moment in this shifting history, and knowing the story of the founding helps us understand the roots of what we currently know and experience when we visit or live in the village. It is a story that encourages us to think about how Granville today is both similar to and importantly different from Granville of the early 1800s—not timeless, but rather, as another recent history of the village put it, marked by both continuity and change.



An illustration of how Granville might have appeared in its earliest days.

Reprinted from William T. Utter, *Granville: The Story of an Ohio Village*