

Modern Times

740-587-3951 ~ www.granvillehistory.org ~ granvillehistorical@gmail.com Nov - 2023

Hanging Chads in Granville...



Museum Hours

*Closed for the Season
We must prepare for next year!*

Services Provided Year Round

We continue to provide research assistance each Thursday from 9:30 to 4

You may also reach us via email, snail mail, our website and phone calls.

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Current board terms extended for one year due to Covid. Dates shown are the original term dates.

Many people remember the controversy about "hanging chads" which swirled around the 2000 presidential election results in Florida. But how many remember that Granville had its own "hanging chad" controversy a full quarter century before?

2023 is a good year in which to do so. Every four years under the Granville Village Charter, like clockwork, a majority of four members are elected to the Village Council. This was the case 48 years ago, in 1975, just as it is this year.

In the 1970 census Granville's population was 3,963. Fifty years later, in 2020, that number had grown to 5,946. Granville's government was a much smaller operation in 1975 than it is today. While the Village had been operating under the Charter for 11 years and had a professional manager, the general fund budget for 1975 was \$343,744 and the Village had 23 employees, including a police force of 4 members. The comparable figures for 2023 would be a general fund budget of \$6,411,598 and 55 total employees, including 28 members of the police force, 14 of whom are full-time and 14 of whom are part-time. There was no Village income tax in 1975, and while the Village boundaries were not identical to those from the nineteenth century, they were close to them. The Village is vastly larger today.

Granville politics were quite different as well. The council elections were partisan, and campaigning consisted mostly of letters of endorsement published in the Granville Booster and knocking on doors. Yard signs and mailers were things of the future. There was no Internet, so results on election night, November 4th, could only be learned either by travelling to the Licking County Board of Elections on North Third Street in Newark or by listening for the results on WCLT or WHTH radio. Only one incumbent member of council filed for re-election, Tom Gallant, who later went on to serve many years as mayor. The relatively open race attracted six candidates all told. And, importantly for what was about to happen, 1975 was the year in which Licking County initiated the use of punch card ballots.

As the evening of Election Night wore on, results trickled in and were reported from various races around the county. But no results were announced for the council race until long after midnight. The next afternoon, Wednesday the fifth, the Newark Advocate reported the same results. But something was amiss. The leading candidates were reported by the Advocate to have gotten more votes than the Village had registered voters! That night all the candidates appeared at the regularly scheduled council meeting to ask what was going on. No one knew. The new-fangled punch card ballots had apparently caused a problem, and the actual results were unknown.

The Board of Elections finally sorted things out, attributed the error to a computer having been fed erroneous totals, and the final results appeared in the Sentinel for November 12th. With greatly reduced vote totals, three of the announced "winners" from Election Night had indeed won, but the final results were

not identical, and one person not initially announced as a winner had indeed prevailed. No lawsuits were pursued to the U.S. Supreme Court. On December 3rd Tom Gallant, Eric Jones, Joan Kent and your author, Rob Drake, were sworn in as Council members and got to work. And Granville's place in the history of "hanging chads" began its drift into the mists of time.

Rob Drake is a member of the Granville Historical Society's Publications Committee.



This photo of the newly elected members of Granville Village Council sworn in by Mayor Norman Luker was published in an early December 1975 issue of the Granville Sentinel with the following caption: "Mayor Norman Luker, (second from right) congratulates fellow councilman Thomas Gallant on his appointment as vice mayor. Looking on are new council members [from left], Robert Drake, Eric Jones and Joan Kent."