



Painted by George Davey 1941

THE STORE AT WEST GRANVILLE

The Store at West Granville

The Store at West Granville has been a town landmark since 1780. The store was the center for buying, selling and bartering necessities for early settlers and mill owners. The store was a place to share news, to socialize, and served as a stagecoach stop and resting place for travelers. The store was the site of Granville's first Post Office.

The first owner of record was Mr. Samuel Wilcox, who built the gambrel-roofed structure. Construction details include handmade nails, hand-hewn beams, wide plank walls and floors on a fieldstone foundation. In its earliest years, the store would have been a somewhat crude, utilitarian structure. There is evidence of plank platforms on the front, back and side, for easier loading and unloading of wagons.

The store's site, at the very center of the community, on an important crossroads of the day, was very practical, and thus it has stood in its original location for over two centuries. Wagons from the numerous mill sites in the area undoubtedly used the store as a stopping and shipping location.

One year after the building of the store, in 1781, the West Granville Church [Second Church of Christ] was constructed nearby. In 1837, the West Granville Academy was built. The West Granville Store, the Church, and the Academy comprised the social, cultural, spiritual, and educational center of a vital and growing community in the late 1700's and early 1800's. The area surrounding these buildings today is remarkable for its abundance of fine 18th and 19th century dwellings.

The first Granville Post Office was established at the store on May 8, 1818, with Reuben Hills as Postmaster. A small mail slot to the left of the store's front door can be seen to this day. The Post Office operated there until 1909. Letter boxes from the West Granville Store were later sold to and displayed at Wiggins Tavern in Northampton. Subsequently, the letter boxes were sold at auction, and their current whereabouts are unknown.

‡ CIRCA 1780 ‡

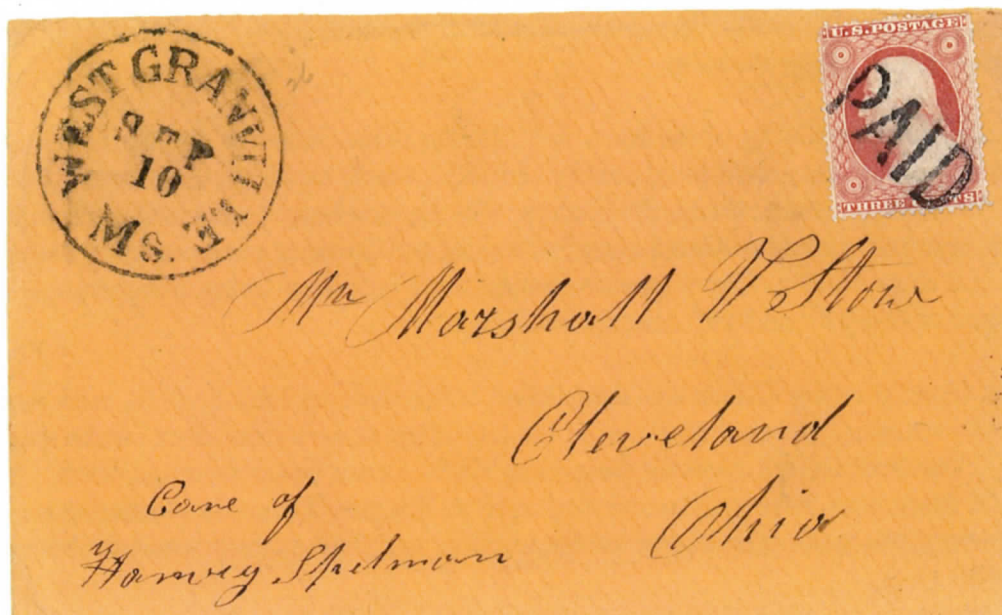
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During the 1800's, the store continued to serve the community. Interior improvements at that time included the addition of lathe and plaster walls, larger windows, and some interesting security features. The store's windows could be secured by the use of solid wood interior shutters and steel bars. In addition, an attractive pediment was added around the front door, and a lean-to constructed along the east side of the building.

During the 1900's, the lathe and plaster walls were covered with sheetrock. Electricity brought lights, refrigeration, and other modern improvements to the West Granville Store.

More recently, Benton's Store, as it has come to be known, was owned and operated by the late Helen Benton, and then her daughter, Ann Crowley, until the 1990's, when it was sold.



Mailed at Granville – September 10, 1860