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THE DENISON ALUMNI THAT BROUGHT US MARIJUANA

If you have been a guest performer or an unlikely Homesteader or Beaver Hall resident that have suffered bouts of mold you probably have stayed for a few nights or more in Bancroft House. While being one of the least used buildings on campus, the Bancrofts that once resided within it were one of the most noted families of Granville and had an influence on today's pseudo-national holiday.

The oldest structure on campus, Bancroft was only built three years after the founding of Denison in 1834. The house was built by Azariah Ashley Bancroft who was by trade a carpenter in the village and a descendent of Samuel Bancroft who founded Granville Massachusetts in 1754. According to William Utter in his history, *The Story of An Ohio Village* (1957), a young Azariah Ashley Bancroft made his way to Granville, Ohio in 1814 with his family after his father, also named Azariah, did not have the financial means to move to out west in 1806. The senior Azariah Bancroft had a brother already living in the village, Samuel, who served as a respected judge for the local community. It was Judge Samuel Bancroft who in 1841 in the Old Academy Building along Main Street issued the first ruling of its kind to declared Ohio's slave codes to be unconstitutional after a runaway slave was caught in Newark.

Although an early abolitionist judge, Samuel Bancroft was opposed to direct confrontation over the issue. In 1836 when the Ohio Anti-Slavery Society planned to host its first abolitionist convention in Granville, Samuel and other prominent Granville citizens opposed the gathering and vowed to use any legal means to keep them from meeting. The convention was banned from meeting within the boundaries of the village but not in the township. The closet building in the township to the village was Azariah Ashely's homestead. A strong abolitionist himself, Azariah Ashley allowed the convention to meet in his barn against the wishes of the mayor and his brother. Talk about family drama. The convention eventually lead to the Great Granville Riots which is an interesting story(ies) that unfortunately does not have space here but one that Kevin Bennet and Tom Martin of the Granville Historical Society discuss in detail in their 2005 article titled Granville's big historical moment was a riot!

Beyond causing family tension and providing the staging area for a riot, Azariah Ashely may best be known as the father of noted western American historian, Hubert Howe Bancroft. Born on May 5, 1831, Hubert would spend most of his adolescents in and around Granville. According to Ann Natalie Hansen's Fall 1997 Historical Times article on Hubert, he was a normal Granville son who hated working in the hot summer fields, disdain of education and resented the over pious nature that came along with the New England transplants. He did eventually overcome his disdain for school and was enrolled for one year in Doane Academy, Denison preparatory academy in the early 1840s. This would be Hubert Bancroft's only formal education. Realizing the need for money, he dropped out of school to work for his cousin as a clerk in their bookstore in Buffalo, New York. The store and the just as doomed second iteration failed, but Bancroft continued to seek a fortune in the publishing world. When gold was discovered in California in 1849, Hubert joined his father in seeking wealth out west. The two joined a group of other citizens of Granville in 1851 on a journey that took them through pre-canal Panama and then up the west coast of the continent.

The two expected to be in California for only a few months with Azariah Ashely prospecting for gold while Hubert went about to establish a book store in San Francisco. Azariah Ashely failed in his search but decided to settle in the Nappa Valley and sent for his wife to join him.

CONTINUED ON BACK

MARIJUANA, CONTD FROM FRONT

Hubert's store, however, quickly rose to prominence in the city as both a publishing house and bookseller. As is almost natural for someone that deals with book, Hubert began collecting other books for his own library. It was not until 1859 however, that he had the idea of shelving 75 distinct works together to create the first volume of the histories of the "Pacific Coast." He began collecting other works about the west coast, even going to the lengths of traveling to Paris, London and Madrid later in his life in search of works about the west. By the end of his life, Hubert would have amassed a collection of over 60,000 works about the western regions of America, Canada, and Mexico. However, he could not do this work all on his own. Due to his bookstore/publishing company success, Hubert was able to employ associates, who best could be described as collectors and interviewers, to search up and down the western half of North America for written works and people of historical prominence that were still alive and could be interviewed.

After building an impressive personal library and a period of indecision, Hubert set off to compile his collection into a unified history of the west, which would be the first of its kind. After passing off the operations of the company to his brother, A. L. Bancroft in 1868, Hubert hired a team of around twenty translators, transcribers, and writers to help him compile his histories. Whenever there was a gap in information, Bancroft or an associate would set out to find the information. In one instance, after Bancroft discovered that he lacked any Russian information for his history of Alaska, he sent a Russian speaking associate to gather the information from the former Russian officials. The associate ended up speeding two years between Washington and Alaska gathering the needed information.

In total Hubert Bancroft and his team would publish thirty-five volumes on subjects ranging from the history of Spanish colonialism of southern Mexico to the Inuit tribes of Alaska. These volumes would gain Bancroft fame from coast to coast, and still today, for providing the first broad but also detailed history on the pacific region. In 1875 he was awarded an honorary degree from Yale (the Denison of New Haven, Connecticut) for the first volume of his work, Native Races of the Pacific States. Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes praised the research method used by Bancroft in a letter to him, although made no mention of the writing quality. Most importantly, Bancroft's works were used by Denison in the late nineteenth century to cover the history of the Americas. A few student essays from the time about Bancroft's work can be found in the Denison archives.

The works were not without criticism though. Many contemporary historians in the past and more today have questioned the soundness of Bancroft's research. Their criticism is mostly related to the translations of languages and assumptions made about indigenous people. Most volumes also lack any mention of the associates the helped Bancroft write, edit or publish the works. From my reading of a few sections of Native Races of the Pacific States, the works are detailed but you are likely to find more excitement in a roman catholic service than these books.

One interesting piece of information about Bancroft's work, however, is that they are the first English work to use of the word "marijuana." While the plant and substance know biologically as *Cannabis sativa* had been known to Europeans and indigenous populations for centuries the substance was known as either as just "cannabis" or "Indian Hemp" or any number of other terms like the kids call it today. According to the Oxford Dictionary, Bancroft was the first person to publish an indigenous word for the plant in English, thus bringing its use into the language. The exact word used was "mariguana" in describing an intoxicating herb used in the marriage customs of the Guachichiles people of southwestern Mexico. Interestingly, Bancroft describes other smoked herbs that different native groups smoked that fit the description of marijuana but he does not note any similarities as he does with types of tobacco.

While surely they would have been another author that would have published the word marijuana into the English language, Bancroft was the first. Also, Bancroft did not popularize the word (I am not sure of any way how a word 600 pages into a dense history can become popular). Its common use is connected to the racist use of the word against the Latino community in the 1930s. But all that consider, if you are lighting up today presumably in a legal state or the Bio Reserve, one of Granville's proudest sons and Denison alumni was the first person to put the word into English use. Oh, also the University of California Berkeley's archive library is named after Bancroft as he gave his entire 60,000 volume collection to the UC system in 1905. That makes Bancroft one of the few people with Denison connection to have a major research library named after them but the other factoid above is way more interesting.

-Zach Correia, Head Writer



Staff "Remote Learning Struggles" Box
Jax "Keep" Preyer, "Managing Editor"
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Zach "Are" Correia, Head Writer
Jay "And" Huff, Senior Writer
Elizabeth "Not" Arterberry, Junior Writer
Katie "Turning" Kerrigan, Junior Writer
Jack "In" May, Sophomore Writer
James "Homework" Whitney, Sophomore Writer



**Today is Monday,
don't forget**