



Volunteers at museum

All around the museum we have volunteers to keep things running. It is time you meet some of them.

Docent Volunteers

Now there's a group of ladies that really deserve some recognition. They faithfully come to the museum on the first Sunday of each month and guide the visitors through the 14 room museum, from 2-5 pm. Each docent is stationed in a section of the museum so visitors can take their time to wander through the museum at their own pace. Docents help to point out special items and answer questions visitors might have. They try to make the tour a "history" lesson along with the joy of listening to the guest's comments. Many people are just amazed that the museum is so large and so filled with interesting items to see. Seeing some items generates the thoughts of articles they used years ago. It really takes a good hour to an hour and a half to tour the whole museum and then you still couldn't see everything.

Of course it is impossible to name all of those who serve voluntarily, but the docents that come nearly every month are: *Nancy Malone, Jessie Scott, Roselyn Watson, Garnet Smith, Dot Leo, Marilyn Decesare* and *LaVerne Kubli*.

Other docents who help with the school tours, are: *Marilyn Rankin, Gerrie Miller, Lynn Gombos, Dottie Kaerchner, Marcella Burgess,* and *Helen DeMalio*.

More help is always needed, so give us a call if you are interested in joining this great dedicated group of ladies.

Newsletter volunteers

It takes a number of people to produce the newsletter for you every other month. *Audrey John* does the research work, finding interesting subjects and articles to be placed in the newsletter. She then sends the info to *Ralph Tolbert*, who resizes and optimizes the pictures for print using Photoshop, then lays out the text and graphics in a readable form, making some changes where needed. After proof reading, the printer, *Valley Graphic*, gets the information by the internet and prints up about 700 newsletters for us. Yes, 700 are sent out bi-monthly...

The printed news letters are then sent to *Betty Whitney* who has the job of putting all the labels on the front page. Next the letters are sent to *Gerrie Miller* who assembles the 2 pages together, putting a sticker on the end and sorting according to the zip codes. Gerrie then takes the finished news letters to the post office to mail them.

So there are four people involved in the bi-monthly job of getting the newsletter in your hands. However if someone goes on vacation, other people have to be pulled into doing the work. My family found just that type of job facing them one day after I served them a nice meal. Then I announced, "Now we have some work to do" Of course I heard a few moans, but they all joined in to help "Grandma" out. (See, I am trying to train them to be the future volunteers for the museum)...

You might like to know the newsletter is sent to every state with the most going to Ohio residents, of course. However 10 are sent to Arizona, 10 to Pennsylvania and the most 18, going to California. A month never goes by that we don't hear from someone thanking us for sending "news from home". This month *Sam Scarnecchia* in Florida, and *Walter Hewitt* in Colorado, sent us notes to say hello.

Next time, learn more of our faithful volunteers.

Luncheon on the Lawn

The yearly "Luncheon on the Lawn" will be held on July 25, 2009. This is the ninth year the Niles Historical Society has sponsored the luncheon. The guest speaker this year is actress, writer and director, *Carol Weakland*. She will be performing her one woman adaptation of *Charlotte Bronte's* classic romantic novel, "Jane Eyre".

As we remember, Jane accepted a job as a governess at Thornfield Hall and fell in love with her employer- a mysterious man with a terrible secret. Carol Weakland will be re-enacting all the favorite characters in this romantic tale.

Ms. Weakland has toured professionally for many years. She is founder of the *Great Expectations Theater Company*, which brings classical literary works to life on stage. She creates and performs in numerous one woman shows including : "Pride and the Prejudice", *Wuthering Heights* and "The Scarlet Letter" to name a few.

The luncheon will begin at 12:00 noon on the Ward-Thomas grounds with Ms. Weakland's performance to follow. Donation for the luncheon and program is \$20.00. Reservations may be made by sending a check to the Niles Historical Society, P. O. Box 368, Niles, Ohio or by calling the office. (330)544-2143 by July 21, 2009. Seating is limited.

Note about Mary Straight 1918 ~ 2009

Shortly after the last news letter was sent, we received word that *Mary Straight* had passed away. Mary was one of those special people, who spent her days serving and caring for others. She worked for her church, visiting the sick and organizing the annual GAB (Garage, Attic, Basement) sale and a real good hearted soul. She had donated many items to the museum that our visitors will forever enjoy seeing. Mary was 91 years old. She will be missed by many of her dear friends and is survived by her son Dennis and his wife, Janie, who lives in Lancaster S. C.





Niles Historical Society
P. O. Box 368
Niles, Ohio 44446

Non-profit
Organization
US Postage Paid
Niles, OH
Permit #337

Monthly Calendar

Public Open House

The first Sunday of each month 2-5 p.m.

Private tours may be scheduled by calling:

The office 330.544.2143

Membership meetings – 10:00am

The first Saturday each month

Executive meeting – 9:30am
prior to membership meeting.

Louis Tabor

1921~2009



We hate to be the bearer of bad news, but on May 29, *Lou Tabor* passed away. Lou was a very special person, loved by many in the community and was such a heart-warming man. Just two years ago we asked Lou to speak at our Annual Spring Dinner. “What shall I talk about?” he asked. I said, “Just talk about

your life. You’ve lead an interesting life that we know little about”. Well, then he said, “How long shall I talk?” Well, I said, “Around one half hour.” Well he prepared his speech and came to the dinner with the rest of his family who were proudly waiting to hear their father’s talk.

So with 30 pages of hand written notes, Lou started his talk. “Years ago I was taking geometry in high school with *Miss Galster* and one axiom we learned “The whole of a quantity is equal to the sum of its parts.” We couldn’t see the wisdom in learning all of those theorems, but let me say living as long as I have and knowing the experiences which I have undergone, and in knowing some of the people who have had an influence in my life, I can see the wisdom in that saying. “The whole of a quantity is equal to the sum of its parts”. All of you here have in some way become a part of me. All of you here, like it or not, are responsible for what I am. And for the most part, all of you here are responsible for the good in me. What ever bad there is about me is of my own choosing, not yours. “...

His talk ended about 3 hours later. It was very interesting and we enjoyed each and every chapter in his life story all hand written on notebook paper. I really don’t think he had any idea it would take so long to read it all. From his early days in Cleveland all the way to his retirement in the Niles School System it was long, yes, but very heart warming and spell-binding .

Lou served in WWII, graduated from Youngstown State and Westminster College, and was a mailman in Niles for 7 years. When a teaching job opened up, he taught at Washington school, becoming Principal at Jackson and Lincoln Schools, retired in 1991 and occasionally substituted until 1999.

You may have gone to school with Lou Tabor, you may have played baseball with him, you may even have worked with him, but you probably had no idea the hardships he endured throughout his life, growing up and living at a time in our history when separation of races was very strong. He was raised by firm, loving parents and grandmother whom he highly respected. He was a man with strong Christian principles and he lived his life as an example to all. He has 3 daughters and 5 sons and 10 grandchildren surviving him.

As an added note, *Betty Whitney* transcribed Lou Tabor’s life history from his notes as he told it to us that night. We wanted to preserve it in the museum personal files. Since then, we have put it into a booklet and made copies to have available to the public.

Go to: www.nileshistoricalsociety.org to see details of Lou Tabor’s book and other books that are available for purchase.

Out-door oven used in Niles years ago.



A long and colorful era in the history of the East Side came to an end on Labor Day, September 6, 1976, with the demolition of the last known outdoor oven in the city.

It has stood in the backyard at the home of *Margaret and Kathryn Marsico* for more than 100 years.

Built by their father, *Joseph Marsico*, and *George Rounds*, it was one of many such ovens which dotted the east Side where most of the Italians lived. (The Marsico out-door oven was lined with fire-brick from the *Niles Fire Brick Company*)

The Marsico family had used the oven for decades to bake all the family's bread, pizza, Easter bread and Christmas delicacies. Like most large families, they baked once or twice a week, turning out 15 to 20 large round loaves and as many pizzas.

Recognizing that the destruction of the old oven was an event replete with nostalgia, the Marsico sisters decided to mark the occasion in proper style, they had a family reunion in their home, fired up the old oven and held one last grand pizza party.

These old ovens usually stood on a strong brick or concrete base. A wood fire was built inside the oven until baking temperature was reached. The hot ashes were then removed with a steel rake. Some women could tell exactly how hot the oven was by judging the color of the "halo" inside the oven, others would toss a sprinkle of flour on to the oven floor to test its heat. One use of the long handled mop was to dampen an excessively hot oven.

Once the bread was baked and the loaves removed with a long-handled spatula, the oven was allowed to cool. It was then cleaned in preparation for its next use. It was filled with enough wood for the next baking, while insuring that the wood remained dry. Usually the ovens were covered by a small shed.



Kathryn and Margaret Marsico sat near the door of the old oven for the last time before the oven was demolished. Women customarily sewed or did needlework while waiting for the bread to bake. Seen above, Kathryn is working on a hand made quilt.

The *Lor-A-Lee Dining Car* was moved from in back of the Niles Bank building, on West Park Avenue, to North Main Street in 1935. It was a landmark for many years. Who can forget the homemade pies- even the vegetables were fresh, not canned. It was run by *Howard (Dutch)* and *Laura Davis*. This picture was taken just after it was moved.



L. to Right: *Mrs. Emma Sandman, Howard and Laura Davis, Georgia Horn, Mary Mangino, Emma Fearsent, (unknown) and Katherine Ramser*



Post Office in Niles, Ohio

Ambrose Mason served as the first Postmaster of Niles, Ohio. The Post Office was located on East State Street in 1912. Picture shows *Frank Mears* and *Pete McDonald*, other men unidentified.



December 28, 1932 Niles Times Newspaper

The present Post Office on West Park Ave. in Niles was one of the Federal Government's "make work" projects during the depression. Being situated across from the McKinley Memorial, it was designed to complement it. Business in the new Post Office began on Jan. 2, 1933 (continued page 4)



Oven Heat Regulator – 1924

The first thermostatic controller to be installed in a gas range was in 1924. This automatically controls the flow of gas to the oven burner, maintaining any desired baking temperature.

Before the invention of the heat regulator, a cook would open the oven door and wave their hand inside to check the temperature before placing her cake in the oven. If you were inexperienced, you could place a small amount of batter in a tiny pan, put it in the oven, and if it burnt, you knew you should turn the gas down. However, if it seemed to cook well, you would put the rest of the batter in your prepared pans and put them in the oven to bake.



Cooking in those days was a guessing game. Many of the recipe would tell you the amounts as, a tea cup full, pinch of, 10cent bottle of, or “a piece of butter the size of a butternut”. You were pretty much on your own to figure out how to put the ingredients together in the proper manner, too. Telephones were not installed in every home, so you couldn’t call home and ask your mother how to cook.

One old recipe book in our collection was compiled with “ingredients readily available” and in those were, milk, flour, sugar, lard, potatoes and vegetables from the garden. Nothing fancy, but it was home cooking.. Wives of the early 1900’s couldn’t go to the corner store and buy things for one meal as we often “run to the store to pick up something” today.

Yes, things have changed in the kitchen today and often when visitors enter the kitchen at the Ward-Thomas Museum, they say “Oh, I remember...My grandmother had a kitchen like this”

We love to stir up happy memories for people who visit the museum...



An addition was later built on east side of the Post Office



Special events....Dates to keep in Mind
 “Luncheon on the Lawn”..... 12:00 July 25, 2009
 “Heritage Day” 11:00-5:00 August 2, 2009
 Garage SaleAugust 14 & 15, 2009
 Regular Open House 2-5, first Sunday of each month.

Please check the Website for the Niles Historical Society. www.nileshistoricalsociety.org Ralph Tolbert has updated the Website recently, adding some interesting stories and photographs to the Website.