

Ruth Cook's return to visit Niles.

The family of *Ruth Cook Naeser* was in town recently. Her relations are from the Pittsburgh and the Cleveland area.



There were 18 family members in attendance and the purpose of the visit was to see where the Cook family lived years ago. They had lunch at a local restaurant, visited the cemetery, the church where the family worshiped, and drove past the family homestead.. Ruth's grandfather, *Arthur Underwood*, was a builder in Niles and three of the houses he built are still standing on Maple and Sayers Ave. Ruth pointed out the school she attended and enjoyed remembering the friendships she made in Niles.

Benjamin James Cook, Ruth's other grandfather, was a shoemaker by trade. He learned his trade in England, making boots for orthopedic physicians clients. When he came to this



country around 1910 he set up the *Cook's Rapid Shoe Repair* on State Street. *Patty Pipino* worked in the store with Mr. Cook and the family gave him the shoe business when Mr. Cook died. *Earnest*, Ruth's father, was an engineer and was transferred to the Pittsburgh area, so the family moved. Ruth, who was just starting 12th grade at the time, hated to leave.



She still has strong ties to this area. Driving from Pittsburgh, Ruth attends the Niles M^cKinley 1943 class reunions which are held three times a year.

Later in the special day with the family, they visited the Ward-Thomas Museum for a tour. They enjoyed seeing the many items that Ruth could point out that she used to use in her daily life. Being able to share these special moments with family members was a real pleasure.

If you plan to 'come home' again to Niles, call us to schedule a date for a special tour with your family. You will be building memories for your family too.

Dave Prosser's birthday is February 24, 1912.

Many of our readers will remember *Dave Prosser* as one of the most beloved teachers in the Niles school system. He



is living in Sebring, Ohio at the Copeland Oaks Retirement Center. He is more or less confined to a wheel chair, but that doesn't stop Dave, he still gets around. He has many friends there and who couldn't enjoy visiting with him? That same happy smile and laugh is still there. He is alert and loves hearing from

his former students and friends. If you would just drop him a note or send him a card, it would mean so much to him. His birthday is on February 24 and Dave will be 97 years old.

His address is:

Dave Prosser
 5800 South 15th St Crandle Medical Center
 Sebring, Ohio 44672-2087

Recent donations to 'Capital Improvement':

John and Wendy James - Surprise Ariz., *Gilbert Macali* and *Nancy Taylor* - Peterborough, N. H. in memory of her husband, *Tom Taylor* (Tom was related to the Taylor family on Arlington St. in Niles. Their beautiful square piano is in the library at the Ward-Thomas Museum.)

Recent donations to 'Endowment Fund':

In memory of *Bill Pittaway*
Frank Burke, *George John*, *Betty Moritz* and *Rita Riedel*, *Joan* and *Al Schultz*, East Amherst N. Y

In memory of *Bill Bauman*
Emyn Rider, *Patricia O'Connell*, *George John* and *Opal Chapter of Ohio Eastern Star*.



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

Non-profit Organization
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Calendar for February and March 2009

Feb. 1	Open House	2-5 pm
Feb 4	Executive Meeting	11am
Feb. 7	Membership Meeting	10 am
Mar. 1	Open House	2-5 pm
Mar. 4	Executive Meeting	11 am
Mar. 7	Membership Meeting	10 am
Apr 1	Executive Meeting	11 am
Apr. 4	Membership Meeting	10 am
Apr. 5	Open House	2-5 pm

In Ohio we are experiencing a true Ohio winter.. We had 12 inches of snow on the 10th of January. Of course it was beautiful to look at, but impossible to navigate. It has been bitter cold, but we are looking forward to spring.



The geranium cuttings in the greenhouse are looking great. The tiny little green leaves are popping out of the 'dead' sticks providing us the promise of beautiful flowers for the garden this year.



Find your address label on the front of this newsletter.

If it has a # on it before your name...

that indicates we have received your dues for this year.

If you enjoy the newsletter and wish to continue, please send your \$15.00 check to:

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



Racing on the Mahoning

You may remember seeing this picture before, but you may not know the story behind the picture.

Horse racing on the river was a royal sport during the early years of the 19th century. It was a form of entertainment, social activities and recreation, for there were no television, radios and all the things we have today to entertain us.

Proficient drivers studied the winter conditions of the Mahoning River and were pretty good judges as to when the ice would be in perfect condition for racing; providing, of course, that the temperature remained the same or grew colder. After the ice reached a 2" thickness, members of the area sportsmen club, sent invitations out to the river racing enthusiasts of the surrounding areas.

The gentlemen often made a trial run over the course between Youngstown and Warren the day before the race, testing the smoothness of the surface. High spirited sportsman would arrive in Youngstown in gay colored sleighs or cutters to which were hitched with high-stepping horses. The horses, well-groomed and wearing fancy harnesses, were really something to see. The sleighs, with their glistening runners, were equipped with warm woolen or buffalo robes to keep their drivers and riders warm.

In Youngstown, the day of the big event, the two horse sleighs and cutters would line up abreast and at the judge's signal they were off on a wild, dashing, fifteen-mile race to their Warren destination.

At each settlement along the river, everyone gathered on the river bank to wait for or the high-spirited horses to come into sight, flash by, and quickly disappear in the direction of the finish line. It was customary that either the losers, or the men in the last sleigh to reach the destination, were the paying hosts and a sumptuous dinner was enjoyed by all, winners and losers.

During those early days, prominent pioneers such as *Judge George Tod*, *Judge William Rayen*, *John E. Woodbridge*, and

Colonel James Hillman of Youngstown, *General Elijah Wadsworth* and *Comfort Mygatt* of Canfield, *Simon Perkins* and *Calvin Pease* of Warren, and *Robert Montgomery* and *David Clendennen* of Coitsville, were members of the sportsmen's club.

There's a legend about one particular river race in which those notable pioneers participated, and which had an interesting end. As the starting time drew near for this particular race, Judge Rayen shouted, "Get your horses on the starting

line,, Remember, The last six contestants to cross the finished line buy dinner for all twelve gentlemen...Are you ready?,, Then... let's ...Go!!!!

For days before this particular race, most of the constants had driven and raced over the course, testing the smoothness of the ice. But one man's business reportedly kept him so busy that he didn't have time for a 'trial' run. But what the other sportsmen didn't know was that *Henry Talbot* did his 'trial' running in the middle of the night, at which time he placed a flock of turkeys in a very convenient area along the course.

When the participants had covered about three-quarters of the course, turkeys came flying and sliding across the ice in front of their horses; consequently, it took the drivers at least five minutes to get their horses under control and headed in the right direction.

Dr. Taylor crossed the finish line, excited that he had arrived first; but, he soon learned that Henry Talbot had arrived five minutes ahead of him. Colonel Hillman of Youngstown arrived next and he was very upset to learn that he was the third, not the second on to cross the finish line. Then the winner was asked where he had been when the turkeys caused so much confusion on the river, Talbot answered, "Why I followed the course on the other side of the river; besides my horse is stone deaf so the commotion didn't upset him."

Over the ensuing years the river has changed. Industrial development along the river banks and use of the river water has become sizeable enough that the water is too warm to freeze. The United States Corps of Engineers is supposed to be dredging the Mahoning River to clean it up, however we have not seen much evidence of this. Maybe some day our great grandchildren can once again enjoy the river as residents used to.

Several years ago we were asked to furnish pictures to be placed at the new O'Charley's Restaurant by the Eastwood Mall. There is a large copy of this picture there. ..

and now you know the rest of the story...

The Warren Tribune closes Niles office.

The Niles Times newspaper is published once a week by the Warren Tribune and the Niles office has moved back to Warren as a cost saving measure...

Kathleen Evanoff, editor of the "Niles Times" has come to appreciate Niles History. Kathy is from Newton Falls and while working in Niles, she has become more familiar with our town and the friendly people who live here. She wrote a great editorial about the preservation of history going on in Niles at the Ward-Thomas Museum. She noted that few towns have an original structure that is significant to the history of the area and urged people to visit our museum.

We are sorry to see Kathy leave the Niles office, but we are glad the Warren paper is still publishing the "Niles Times". The everyday happenings of today will be tomorrow's history and without a local daily paper publishing the "events" in picture and writing, it is hard to capture these memories. Local newspapers have a wealth of information worth saving.

Remember *Agnes Lopatta* and *Bessie Biddle's* writings in the Niles Times? We have a few of the old Niles Times newspapers and what fun it is to read in detail the daily events of our town. Remember how a wedding write-up included every last detail, right down to the color of the linens on the table, flowers and silver used. Some of the old wedding write-ups covered a fourth of a page in space.

Every club had a corresponding secretary that could expect a call in the morning from Bessie or Agnes asking for information of the meeting and program of the night before. Their articles also included comments from people as to their health, operations, new babies born and out-of-town visitors to their home.

This tells future historians a lot about a town in old writings. It tells how people lived, what they ate, what they did, entertainment, travel and how they coped with their daily life. Unfortunately, once historical documents lose a proper storage location, they get tossed aside and are lost forever.

Our staff is continually collecting information for future historians benefit. Our biggest problem is that we are running out of space for proper storage. It is our hope that we will be able to build a new building north of the museum. The building that will be used as a lecture hall, display area, and much needed storage. Our "Capital Improvement" fund is growing slowly and it will take time we know, but the dream is still alive....



The time capsule placed in the cornerstone of the original Niles McKinley High School, later Edison Junior High, contained the above newspapers printed on September 25, 1914. That was the date for the dedication of the new school.



Last month we ran an article on the *Belvedere Inn*. It sure brought back memories to many of our readers. By the way, the girls standing in front of the sign were the *Scarnecchia sisters*, *Margaret*, *Gloria* and *Irene*. (We weren't able to squeeze the names in last month.)

Tony Magliaro called from Las Vegas, Nevada to tell us how much he enjoyed the article. He said, "he remembered *Gig Caldron* and making 50 cents on a bag being a caddy at the golf course. He remembered the meatball sandwiches at the Inn, Gloria, and playing trumpet in the band". Since leaving Niles, Tony has played with the big bands and met lots of famous people throughout his career, but most of all he has fond memories of his home town. Fortunately when he called the museum, *George John* and *Frank Burke* were there, so he was able to talk to them too. Stop by to see us when you get back in town, Tony.