

The Spring Dinner will be held at *Ciminero's Banquet Center* on April 29th at 6:00 pm.

We are delighted to have *Christina Fischer* as the speaker. Chris is a Social Studies teacher and Library Media specialist at the *Edgewood Senior High School* in Ashtabula, Ohio. She is a graduate of Youngstown University where she received her BS in Education and Mansfield University in Mansfield Penna. where she received her Masters Degree in Education.

**Recent visitors to the museum**



Mary Fuller, Jack and Judy Wistar from Warren with Docent, Marilyn Decesare



George and Letha Pihonsky from Niles.



Her message to the audience will be about *President Abraham Lincoln* and will focus on Springfield, Ill and Lincoln's relationships. You will thoroughly enjoy her talk and learn things you never knew about our famous president, Abraham Lincoln. Chris has studied President Lincoln for years, visited his home and received the prestigious *Horace Mann-Abraham Lincoln Fellowship* in 2008. The event marks the Bicentennial year of Lincoln's birth and is open to the public.

**Tickets are \$20.00 per person.  
 Reservations are due by April 22.  
 For more information please call:  
 330-544-2143 or 330-718-6974.**

**Invitation to You**

As a dues paying member of the Niles Historical Society, you are cordially invited to attend the membership meetings. We meet on the first Saturday of the month at 10:00 a.m. in the Westenfield Room.

We hear reports concerning the activities at the museum and we discuss upcoming events. The meeting is followed by "coffee" time visit.

We encourage you to attend and become involved in this organization. We have many fields of interest and you will be working along side people who care for the preservation of history just like you do. Your ideas and assistance is needed and you will gain the fellowship of meeting new friends.

**Winter in Ohio**

We have been really looking forward to spring here in Ohio. This has been a very long winter and once the snow started, it seemed like it would never quit.

It was obvious we needed someone to plow out the driveway and parking area so we could get back the long driveway to check on the buildings.

It was pretty to look at but not easy to trudge through.

*Tom Rider* has plowed the snow when needed and we appreciate what a great job he does. He's another one of our wonderful volunteers who help to keep the place going...





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 on  
 first Saturday each month  
 Executive meeting one hour prior to  
 membership meeting.**

**Flower/Plant Sale coming the middle of May.**

Call 330.544.2143 if you would like an order blank.

**We need your help...**

Can you identify anyone in this picture?

It is a shoe repair business and it seems to be in a very long narrow room. Do you have any idea where the building is or was located?

**Dave Prosser says “THANK YOU”**

Last month we asked you to send a card to *Dave Prosser* who celebrated his 97th birthday on Feb 24th. Dave was thrilled... We received a note from him and he would like you to know how very glad he was to hear from each and every one of you. The days are long and your little act of kindness was deeply appreciated.

Dave’s address is:  
 5800 South 15th St.  
 Cradle Medical Center,  
 Sebring, Ohio 44672-2087  
 in case you missed it.

If you find photographs such as the shoe store to the left interesting, then please share your photos with us.

Scanning a photograph does not harm the image in any way and you get to preserve a piece of Niles history forever.

Please contact:  
**330-544-2143**



## Times do change

The 94<sup>th</sup> Mahoning Valley McKinley Club Annual Banquet was held on Friday evening, January 30, 2009. The banquet is held in the auditorium of the National McKinley Birthplace Memorial, dedicated in 1917 to honor President William McKinley born in Niles, Ohio on January 29, 1843.



There are **no kitchen facilities at the Memorial**, so cooking and serving a sit-down dinner for many guests requires much advance planning. This year the meal was prepared and served by the staff of the Saratoga Catering and Restaurant in Warren, Ohio.

Tables are set up in the entryway to the auditorium where containers of hot food are placed. The plates are filled by one group of servers, and another crew is on deck to distribute the hot meal to guests seated at round tables, with white tablecloths and decorated with flags and red carnations. President McKinley often wore a red carnation in his lapel, and thus the red carnation is the state flower of Ohio.

The Ida McKinley Chapter, Order of the Eastern Star was active in Niles from 1906-2007. Due to declining membership, the Chapter merged with Opal Chapter in Cortland on March 27, 2007. However, for many years, members of Ida McKinley Chapter prepared and served the McKinley Banquet.

Preparations for the banquet began in early January when numerous committees were organized. The Chapter Officers spent Saturday taking inventory and cleaning the kitchen at the Niles Masonic Temple, where the food was prepared.

Dinner plates were loaded onto carts and cups, glasses, silverware, etc. were packed into bushel baskets all to be transported from the Temple, across the street to the Memorial. The week of the banquet, tables had to be set and decorated, and two members of "Star" were in charge of serving the honored guests who sat at the Speakers Table on the stage.

The evening of the banquet, one committee was responsible for placing rolls, salad, and dessert at each place before the 6:30 welcome by the McKinley Club President. The plate filling members were at their station in the entryway waiting for the roasters of meat, potatoes, gravy, and vegetables to be brought by truck, from the Temple kitchen by male "Star" members and Masonic brothers. Plate servers were in line waiting to place the hot meal in front of each guest as quickly as possible.

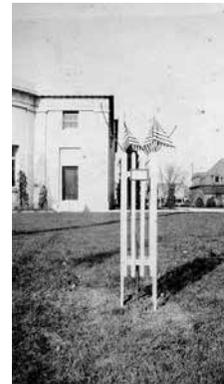
While the program was going on, the workers would go to the Temple to eat. As soon as the meeting was adjourned, clean up began. This involved transporting back to the Temple everything that was brought to the Memorial and every dish, silver, pot and pan had to be washed and put away. Before the 1970's the Temple kitchen did not have a dishwasher!!!!

Yes, the banquet involved much work by the many hands, but friendship and fellowship made the task worthwhile. As a member of "Star", I helped on the plate filling line for many years and I have "degrees" in dishing up green beans and mashed potatoes. This year I was a "sit down" guest for the first time ever at the McKinley Banquet. I have enjoyed the journey from then to now.

*Nancy Malone* is also one of our faithful volunteers at the Ward-Thomas Museum. Our thanks to Nancy for writing this article. Many people will remember the delicious meals the Ida McKinley Chapter served at the McKinley Banquet under nearly impossible conditions. Considering this event takes place in the dead of winter with all types of weather conditions, the meals were always hot and on time. Most of the 350 guests never knew what was going on behind the scene.

— Nancy Malone, Worthy Matron 1973, Ida McKinley Chapter

## My, My, how I've grown...



You can never be sure when some one gives you a stack of old snapshots what will be in them. This snapshot was taken in 1922 and the corner of the memorial caught our eye.

Upon further investigation, it was determined the picture was taken when the Mt Vernon Black walnut tree was a young twig. The story goes, that the seed was brought back from Mt. Vernon, Va. and Mrs. John Tibbett planted the seed and got it started. The plaque beneath the tree states it was a Mt Vernon Walnut tree planted on the memorial grounds in 1919 in memory of the World War heroes.



The same view of the tree was taken last month, 90 years after it was planted.

## 1882 Civil War Monument

On West Park Avenue, opposite the Niles Post Office and in the southwest corner of the McKinley Memorial grounds stands a tall stately Quincy granite monument honoring *Major-General James Birdseye McPherson*, one of the real heroes of the Battle of Atlanta, July 22, 1864.



Today, residents of Niles pass their Civil War monument probably not fully aware of its presence, for as long as anyone can remember, it has always been there. General McPherson was the highest-ranking soldier from Ohio killed in the war. General Sherman noted General McPherson's heroic qualities in the eulogy.

On December 24, 1878 the McPherson post #16 of the Ohio Department of the Grand Army of the Republic was organized in Niles with 30 charter members. *Josiah Robbins* served as their first commander. The post grew to 150 members, although there were some 250 veterans from the community who saw service during the Civil War.

The purpose of this group was to instill in the minds of others the importance of a patriotic devotion to the ideals for which these veterans fought and to revere the names of those who made the supreme sacrifice. Regular meetings were held and civic affairs were always discussed.

Members of the McPherson Post #16 became interested in erecting a monument in honor of Major-General McPherson. The idea of raising funds for such a monument was presented to the voters of Weathersfield Township in March 1882 and the issue passed almost unanimously. The monument was selected, a gray granite shaft surmounted by an eagle. The main shaft bears the inscription:

*"Erected to the memory of our  
fallen heroes in the war of 1862- 1865.*

*By McPherson Post #16, Department of Ohio GAR  
and the Citizens of Weathersfield Township,  
General McPherson Killed July 22, 1864."*

Also on each side of the main shaft, just below the war emblems, is listed one of the following four battles: "Fredricksburg, Gettysburg, Look Out Mountain, & Shiloh"

On Saturday, October 21, 1882 the monument was dedicated, starting off with the cannon being fired. A parade was formed and marched downtown, arriving at the speaker's stand which was erected in front of the Town Hall. At that time the Town Hall was located on what is now known as North Arlington Street, just west of where the McKinley Memorial now stands.

Speakers of the day were the *Hon. E. B. Taylor* of Warren and *Hon. William McKinley* from Niles, both paid inspiring tribute to the patriotism of the private soldier as a power behind the famous generals of the army. They pointed it out that our nation owed it to her soldiers to deal generously with them, as they will never be overpaid for their sacrifices upon the battle field.

Lest we forget the past, one hundred and twenty seven years later those words still ring true. Next time you are in that area of town, look over at the monument and remember all our fallen heroes.

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## Off-Hand Flourishing at Museum

In a recent issue of Martha Stewart's "Living" magazine there was an article about the art of penmanship with eight pages of examples. It mentions how students once perfected their script by meticulously copying penmanship exercises.

Fountain pens and liquid ink wells are a thing of the past for most of us and along with that goes the art of letter writing as our Victorian ancestors practiced it. Penmanship was a real art and classes were given to master the art. Roger Spencer was known as the father of American handwriting. Free spirited sketches of doves and horses were called flourishes.

According to the article the designs now are being framed and sold to decorators of home design to create a charming accent to a room, and apparently large hand drawn works are more valuable than small reproductions. The article states that an elaborately detailed mid-century animal, signed by the penmen, can sell for thousands of dollars.

We have three examples of off-hand flourishing in our museum. The large 26 x 33 design was by C. W. Dennison, born in 1858 and died in 1936, the great uncle of Marilyn Rankin who is a docent at the museum and donated the picture to the society years ago.



*Marilyn Rankin*

Two other smaller ones are also seen in the picture. One has a date of 1846, created by Charinela Dustman has a flower design and the other one is a flying bird with the words "God Bless our Home".

Next time you are in the museum you might like to look more closely at them. The saying, "What goes around comes around" seems to be true in the art of penmanship. Page 4