

**Sunday Open House and FREE tomato plant**



On May 2, every adult visitor who toured the museum received a beautiful free tomato plant that was grown in our greenhouse. These are heritage "Israeli" plants grown for their taste and size. They have very little acidity and few seeds and are very good on those wonderful bacon, lettuce, and tomato sandwiches. Over 40 plants were given away to the visitors. With the weather being so mild it will not be long before they can be planted outside. This is the first year we have been able to provide plants grown in our greenhouse. It was such a success we hope to do it again next year.

**Annual Spring Dinner**



Pictured: Fremont Camerino, Sarah Vodrey and Dave Prosser

Our annual spring dinner was held at Ciminero's Banquet Center with over 100 people in attendance. The speaker for the evening *Sarah Vodrey*, curator at the *East Liverpool Museum of Pottery*, provided an interesting program on the type of pottery that has been made in the Ohio valley through the years.

Many of you will remember *David Prosser*. He attended the dinner and talked briefly about teaching in the Niles school system.. With a twinkle in his eye, he shared some of the highlights of his 98 years of life. He is now living in Copland Oaks in Sebring. He said, "With 3 good meals a day and two nurses to look after you, what more could you want at 98?" Dave enjoyed seeing some of his former students at the dinner and invited everyone to come see him.

**"Heritage Day"**

Mark your calendar for August 1, 2010, that is the date of the annual "Heritage Day" at the museum. It is always a nice day to stroll around the grounds, looking at the flower gardens, viewing displays throughout the museum, Westenfield room and barn. The park benches have been refinished and are placed around the grounds. There you can rest a minute and visit with friends passing by. Hope to see you on August 1<sup>st</sup>.

**"Luncheon on the Lawn"**

For the past nine years we have held the "Luncheon on the Lawn" with speakers and a box lunch under a tent on the grounds. It has been very well attended, in fact we easily could have sold more tickets to every event. With the uncertainty of the weather every year, planning out door events is getting to be impossible. We have been very lucky not to have been blown away with sudden storms. Our main problem is the lack of adequate space indoor for a close alternate location in case of rain.

With the growing number of donated items to the museum, "program" space is growing very small. There was a time we were able to have programs in the library, then we moved out to space in the Westenfield Room where seating was available for programs. Now with 5 display cases and other items filling the Westenfield Room we are hard pressed for "program seating space". We are working on ideas to improve the situation, but we are sorry, we will not be able to hold the "Luncheon on the Lawn" this year.

**Barn Sale.**

Soon after the Heritage Day celebration, we will be holding a trash and treasure sale of gently used items. We call this our "Barn Sale" because we have been holding it in the barn for the past several years. If you have anything you think we could sell at the sale, please keep us in mind and save the items till then.. Items are priced to sell and all the money we receive goes into the general fund to help support the museum. We will let you know the exact date of the sale in the next news letter. Also we will tell you when you can drop off the items you wish to donate.

---

We have received calls from members asking if they have paid this year's dues. If you are current with your yearly dues, there will appear an asterisk \* at the end of your name on the mailing address. Please be current with your dues.



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

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

Visit our Website: [www.nileshistoricalsociety.org](http://www.nileshistoricalsociety.org)  
and check out the Photos and Stories links.

Monthly Calendar	
<b>Public Open House</b> The first Sunday of each month 2-5 p.m.	<b>Trustees:</b> Fred Kubli, Jesse Scott, Roselyn Watson
Private tours may be scheduled by calling: The office 330.544.2143	<b>Officers:</b> Fremont Camerino .....President Patricia Nelson ..... Vice-President Nancy Malone .....Recording Secretary Betty Whitney.....Corresponding Secretary Ruth Van Huffel.....Treasurer Frank Burke ..... Assistant Treasurer
<b>Membership meetings</b> – 10:00am The first Saturday each month <b>Executive meeting</b> – 9:30am prior to membership meeting.	Anne Townley ..... Program Editor Chairman Audrey John ..... Research Editor Nancy Malone ..... Education Editor Ralph Tolbert ..... Technology Editor

The following is your motivational thought for the day:  
**“Make Music with what You have left.”**

On Nov. 18,1995, *Itzhak Perlman*, the violinist, came on stage to give a concert at Avery Fisher Hall at Lincoln Center in New York City. If you have ever been to a Perlman concert, you know that getting on stage is no small achievement for him. He was stricken with polio as a child, and so he has braces on both legs and walks with the aid of two crutches. To see him walk across the stage one step at a time, painfully and slowly, is an awesome sight. He walks painfully, yet majestically, until he reaches his chair. Then he sits down, slowly, puts his crutches on the floor, undoes the clasps on his legs, tucks one foot back and extends the other foot forward.

Then he bends down and picks up the violin, puts it under his chin, nods to the conductor and proceeds to play. By now, the audience is used to this ritual. They sit quietly while he makes his way across the stage to his chair. They remain reverently silent while he undoes the clasps on his legs. They wait until he is ready to play.

But this time, something went wrong. Just as he finished the first few bars, one of the strings on his violin broke. You could hear it snap—it went off like gunfire across the room. There was no mistaking what that sound meant. There was no mistaking what he had to do.

People who were there that night thought to themselves: “We figured that he would have to get up, put on the clasps again, pick up the crutches and limp his way off stage—to either find another violin or else find another string for this one.”

But he didn’t. Instead, he waited a moment, closed his eyes and then signaled the conductor to begin again. The orchestra began, and he played from where he

had left off. And he played with such passion and such power and such purity as they had never heard before.

Of course, anyone knows that it is impossible to play a symphonic work with just three strings. I know that, and you know that, but that night Itzhak Perlman refused to know that. You could see him modulating, changing, re-composing the piece in his head. At one point, it sounded like he was de-tuning the strings to get new sounds from them that they had never made before.

There was an extraordinary outburst applause from every corner of the auditorium. We were all on our feet, screaming and cheering, doing everything we could to show how much we appreciated what he had done. He smiled, wiped the sweat from this brow, raised his bow to quiet us, and then he said—not boastfully, but in a quiet, pensive, reverent tone—You know, “*sometimes it is the artist’s task to find out how much music you can still make with what you have left*”. What a powerful line that is.

And who knows? Perhaps that is the definition of life—not just for artists but for all of us. Here is a man who has prepared all his life to make music on a violin of four strings, who, all of a sudden, in the middle of a concert, finds himself with only three strings; so he makes music with three strings, and the music he made that night with just three strings was more beautiful, more sacred, more memorable, than any that he had ever made before, when he had four strings.

So, perhaps our task in this shaky, fast-changing, bewildering world in which we live is to make music, at first with all that we have, and then, when that is no longer possible, to make music with what we have left.

The following story was sent to us from *Eileen Roberts*, who resides in California now. Many residents of Niles will remember small grocery stores scattered throughout the residential areas of Niles. The neighborhood stores, where you were sent to get a loaf of bread, or milk for dinner.... and there was always the penny candy to buy. Thanks, Eileen for bringing back some memories of years ago.

## Roberts' Grocery Store

In 1914 my grandparents, *Alfonsina* and *Tony Roberts*, traveled from *Quadrelle*, a small town near Naples, Italy and settled in Niles, Ohio. Grandpa got a part time job at *Stevens Steel Mill*. In 1930, they bought a two-story house on the corner of Wood and Reno Streets to raise their seven sons. They needed extra income, so decided to turn a portion of the house into a grocery store. Almost from the beginning, my grandmother took over the store and became an exceptional businesswoman for her time.

I marveled at her capability in the grocery store. She used a ledger book to record neighborhood purchases. Self-taught in English, she carefully noted each item with a slow manner, almost in a calligraphy fashion. She did this using a carpenter's pencil for posting. I recall her shaping a pencil point using a sharp knife kept behind the meat case.

It was a well stocked Italian store, the wonderful aromas of cheeses, salamis, pepperoni and cold cuts filled your nostrils as you entered the store. Shelves were lined with bottles and cans of imported olive oils and delicacies. Barrels of black and green olives sat colorfully by the meat case. Large parmesan cheese rounds hung on the back wall. Next to them was a long-handled reaching stick with gripping prongs to help my short grandmother obtain cans from the top shelves. Everything was so orderly, even the home made ricotta pies in the cooler were pre-cut and ready to be sold either by the slice or the entire pie.

People from nearby streets of Fulton, Mason, Fenton, Cedar and Robbins Avenue came to the store on a regular basis. I helped my grandmother bake pizzas every Friday for Uncle Louie's *Landmark Cafe'* on State Street in downtown Niles. The local patrons looked forward to these tasty pies every week.

As a child of seven, I spent long summer hours with my grandmother in the store. I never had to want for treats as a kid. On a hot summer day I dug into the deep freezer with its double-hinged folding top and retrieved a frozen orange popsicle. The large candy case contained every kid's dream... peanut-buttery Mary Jane's, root beer barrels, candy buttons on a strap, Turkish Taffy, bubble gum and licorice straps.

Shortly before Christmas, large barrels of smelts, squid and dried codfish arrived at the store. Grandma soaked the cod in preparation for the traditional fish meals served Christmas Eve. Later that evening, the whole family attended Midnight Mass where she sang in the choir.

Grandma died in 1951 and Grandpa ran the store until his death in 1969. Later, family members bought the house and turned the store into a pizza parlor. Tony and Alfonsina Roberts had seven sons; *Gene, Michael, Peter, Carmen, Sam, Steve, & Louie*. Wonderful grandparents...wonderful memories!

The attached picture was taken circa 1916. One of the windows on the right side of the house was removed and replaced with an entry door to the store.



Pictured: L-R: *Grandpa Tony* holding *Sam Roberts*, *Steve Roberts* (my father) on grass, *Grandma Alfonsina* holding *Louie Roberts*. *Michael Spizuoco*, Grandma's brother, is standing to her left.

If you think you are too old to learn the computer... Take a note from 94 year old, *Lloyd Rupp*. He's having the time of his life, always sending along information he gets from the internet. Here's some thoughts from the 1500's that Lloyd thought we'd be interested in.

Baths consisted of a big tub filled with hot water. The man of the house had the privilege of the nice clean water, then all the other sons and men, then the women and finally the children, last of all the babies. By then the water was so dirty you could actually lose someone in it. Hence the saying, "Don't throw the baby out with the Bath water".

Houses had thatched roofs-thick straw-piled high, with no wood underneath. It was the only place for animals to get warm, so all the cats and other small animals (mice, bugs) lived in the roof. When it rained it became slippery and sometimes the animals would slip and fall off the roof. Hence the saying, "It's raining cats and dogs".

The floor was dirt. Only the wealthy had something other than dirt. Hence the saying, "Dirt poor." The wealthy had slate floors that would get slippery in the winter when wet, so they spread thresh (straw) on floor to help keep their footing. As the winter wore on, they added more thresh until, when you opened the door, it would all start slipping outside. A piece of wood was placed in the entranceway. Hence the saying a "thresh hold"

And you thought history was boring... Thanks, Lloyd

Notes from our friends.

*Pauline Huffman Waltner* writes from Freeman, S.D. that she is 91 now.

Her father was dentist, *Dr. Huffman* and the family lived at 619 N. Main Street in Niles.

*Walt Hewitt* lives in Denver Colorado and is treasurer of the Denver Jazz Club Newsletter. Apparently he is still playing the trumpet.

*William Alfonso* sent along a note to tell us that he used to help *Mr. Pool* take care of the lawn and greenhouse at 503 Brown Street, the home of *Mr. & Mrs. Jacob Waddell*. He said he received the large sum of 25 cents a day—Good money in those days for a young boy.

*Jim* and *Anne Townley* along with 10 other individuals were recently honored as “Community Stars” in Trumbull County as caring, compassion & committed volunteers..

*Jim* and *Anne’s* work with the Red Cross, Presbyterian Church and Historical Society epitomizes in true form what volunteering is all about.



*Jim and Anne Townley* and their family attending the event at Packard Music Hall.

## Tornado season

It hardly seems possible, but it was 25 years ago on May 31, 1985 that a Class F-5 tornado ripped through Niles, Ohio wreaking havoc where it toppled a skating rink and shopping mall, leveled dozens of houses, ripped through the Union Cemetery, injured many people, and took several lives.

Our web site, [www.nileshistoricalsociety.org](http://www.nileshistoricalsociety.org), was designed by *Ralph Tolbert* and the site has some detailed information about the tornado on the “Stories and Photos” page link. If you have access to a computer, you can find personal interviews from *Russ Samuels*, *Dick Richards*, *Linda Bennett*, *Zoa Lykins*, *Nancy Stauffer*, and *Fire Chief Semple*.

The video links originate from a Trumbull County Historical Society Video Contest entry by *Kristen Davis* and *Jason Viers*, students in Niles McKinley High School Visual Communications class taught by *Ralph Tolbert*. *Kristen* and *Jason’s* video won first place and the \$3000.00 prize. *Ralph* then digitized and converted it to a format for our web site.

Additional photos may be viewed at:  
<http://www.may311985tornadoes.com/>

Many can still remember the other tornado that passed through Niles on June 7, 1947. It hit in the area of Route #422 and continued on nearly the same path as the 1985 tornado. Of course, there was less damage with the one in 1947, but never the less it remains locked in the memory of the people who lived through it.



## Unknown Item.

## What is it?



Please help us identify the item in the picture. Each side is 12” long attached with two small hinges that allows it to open to 24 inches and is 13 inches tall as it stands in the picture

## What was it Used For?

It appears to be well constructed from ¼” wood and does not appear to be worn at all. It is marked with a “2”. Usually we can identify all the items that are donated to the museum, but this one really has us baffled.

Any ideas?