

Niles Historical Society News

The Niles Historical Society Spring Banquet, April 19, 2018 at Ciminero's Banquet Center in Niles was well attended. The speaker for the evening was *Sandra Zikursh* who in costume presented "Life in the Western Reserve", A glimpse into a pioneer woman's life presented with humor and facts. *Ralph Tolbert* presented a **slide show that featured a pictorial history of Niles titled, Niles' Memories.**

The yearly tours of the Ward-Thomas House for 3rd grade students of Niles City Schools were canceled by the school system due to lack of funds to transport students to the site. Because of this, members, *Sandy Bilovesky* and *Donna Nellis*, went to the schools and presented the History of Niles Program to the students.

The students were amazed to learn that the object to the right was a toaster and that it was manufactured in Niles by The Knoblach Toaster Company. This toaster was just one of many items that were presented to the classes.



Currently the Society is widening its involvement with historical societies in Trumbull and Mahoning Counties and the Ohio Historical Society. The Society will continue its collaboration with the McKinley Memorial and Avenue and Main.

We will participate in Harry Stevens Day on July 1, stop by our tent to check out the publications the Society has to offer (and save on shipping fees).

The Trumbull County Commissioners and Trumbull County Fair Board have reopened the Historical Village on the Fair Grounds. Many improvements to the buildings have been made. The Niles Historical Society is one of many Trumbull County historical societies who will have displays of area history in the Old Village Church July 10—14 during Trumbull County Fair Week.

Heritage Day will be celebrated Saturday, August 5, 2018, from 12:00—5:00 PM on the grounds of the Ward-Thomas House. As we did last year, artisans and vendors will present their talents and wares. There will be arts and crafts, guest speakers and activities for the children and of course, food for purchase. If you have a particular skill or craft that you would like to present, please contact Anna Marie: 330-856-5274.

There is no better time to enjoy the beauty and amazing colors of the flower garden than during Heritage Day when the blossoms are at their fullest display.



July 31, 1976 Niles Daily Times by Bruce Stevens

Niles Daily News ran the width of the page, announcing "McDONALD THE VILLAGE BEAUTIFUL."

Under it was a subheading proclaiming, "A Big Engineering Task Is Nearing Completion With The New McDonald Viaduct." And now today, the headlines could read the same way after more than 55 years. The viaduct, which provides a direct route between Niles and McDonald, has been undergoing a massive renovation program, which will cost in the neighborhood of \$1.2 million, for the past year. In that time, the entire superstructure of the bridge has been replaced.



The work on the viaduct is now being completed almost to the day of the project finishing date, with a tentative ribbon cutting having been set by state officials for 10 a.m. Ryser, Trumbull County Engineer, explained that the project involved using the original piers, abutments, foundation, and footings through some repair work on these had to be done.

What was replaced was the superstructure of the viaduct, including the deck and wearing surface, Ryser said, adding that in the bridge's superstructure, "we've simplified it. The bridge, which was rebuilt by the Soda Construction Co., is 933 long, is 40 over the Mahoning river, and averages 30 feet over the bend near the river.

Construction of the viaduct began in August of 1975. However, the smoothness of the operation in 1976 bears little resemblance to the events surrounding the original building of the structure in the early 1900's.

In 1921 the relationship between Niles and McDonald was something less than it is today, and an article appearing in the Niles Daily News on Friday, December 2, 1921 read like a proposed trade agreement between nations separated by the Atlantic Ocean than cities divided by the meandering Mahoning River. Continued on Page 1

A wooden staircase was used to reach the unfinished portion of the viaduct. This picture was taken from the McDonald side of the bridge.





Ward-Thomas Museum
Home of
The Niles Historical Society
503 Brown Street
Niles, OH 44446

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

Preserving and promoting Niles' History for future generations

Visit our Website: www.nileshistoricalsociety.org
Check out the Photos and Stories links.

Monthly Calendar

Museum 'Open House'
The first Sunday of each month 2-5 p.m.
Last tour begins at 4 pm

Membership Meetings – 10:00am
The first Saturday each month
Executive meeting – 9:30am
prior to membership meeting.

Officers:

Anna Marie Beagle President
Dave Martin Vice-President
Lynda Ralston Treasurer
Coleen Tominey Secretary
Ruth Van Huffel Corr. Secretary

Private tours may be scheduled by calling:
330.544.2143

Bridge continued...The article appeared under an eight column headline on page one which read, Niles and McDonald to Co-Ordinate, which was followed by another in a box that asked “McDonald has done its share toward providing a direct route into Niles. What has Niles done towards getting a direct route from Niles into McDonald?”

The article contains an interview with *James Freed*, the first mayor of the village of McDonald, who explains that the viaduct is almost completed. McDonald has begun work on a road (McKinley Blvd.) from the village to the viaduct, but complains that the City of Niles has taken no action to extend the road or connect the two cities.

He said, “In arranging to build this important link of highway between two cities, we did it with the wish of cordial relations, for no man or town desires to be isolated, but does like to consort with fellow men and sister cities. Niles in a business way has more opportunities to offer us than McDonald has to offer Niles. With proper bridge and road connection, it is natural that business should go Niles way, and see no reason why our field should not be legitimately cultivated by the Niles business men along trade extension lines.”

However, the citizens of Niles repeatedly rejected the request for a road to be built through Russia Field on the north side of the river, which would connect the two downtown areas of the cities.

The bridge, however was completed in November of 1922, and the Niles Daily News ran the following description of the viaduct. “This bridge is 950 feet long and about 60 feet wide, with a wing of 950 feet of road approach on the Niles side and 1225 feet approach on the McDonald side. The fill on the north side is partially made, and one can by careful driving in a car negotiate the crossing of the bridge and wind up around a steep incline ‘till the top of the south hill is reached. There one has a fine view of the entire valley. One can see Niles, Girard, and the rolling land between these two towns, and also get a view down the river toward Youngstown. It is a sight that is

entrancing and beautiful and speaks of the wonderful development of the Mahoning Valley within a ten mile stretch.

The viaduct, according to the newspaper articles, was built by the Lake Erie Construction Co. of Cleveland and the Walsh Construction Company, and the project was under supervision of W.E. Cook.

The cost of the building was between \$400,000 and \$500,000, which was paid for by Trumbull County, Weathersfield, the Village of McDonald and the Conneaut Land Company, which was the corporation which handled all of the real estate interests of the Carnegie Company.

Come August 5, Niles and McDonald residents will again have the opportunity to partake of this ‘beautiful sight.’

This photo of the final phases of construction on the Niles-McDonald viaduct was taken in 1922 looking toward McDonald.



To discover more about the bridges of Niles, Ohio, visit the link below
<http://www.nileshistoricalsociety.org/brdgz.htm>

Dateline: July 9, 1970

Closing Tomorrow After 40 Years On the “Strip” The Belvedere To Be Razed

Many people in our community would proudly tell you they met their husband or wife at the Belvedere Club – a very popular place many years ago on route 422 on the strip. The Belvedere Club, designed like a road house was “the spot” to meet people during the 30’s and through the 60’s.



The canopied entrance to the Belvedere.

Owner *Carmen Scarnecchia* began to work in the local mills at an early age. Later he distributed soft drinks and then he worked as a butcher, but he always wanted to work for himself. Carmen’s dream became a reality when, on May 1929, he and a partner, *Marian D’Amico*, opened the newly-built Belvedere Club.

“The Bel”, as his restaurant and nightclub was soon nicknamed, was on nearly an acre of land at 5373 Youngstown-Warren Road. The name “Belvedere” is an architectural term which means “Beautiful View”. The nine-hole Eastwood golf course, owned and operated by *Gig Caldrone*, was located behind the club. The club house of the golf course was built by *Mr. Orand*, Gig’s father-in-law. That building still stands on the west side of Eastwood Mall, along side Mosquito Creek behind what is now the BP Car Wash. Dr Skiffy’s office now occupies the former club house.

After the golfers finished their game, they would stop at the Belvedere Club to swap stories and have a sandwich or cold drink. The Durig Farm was east of the Eastwood golf course- the farm house stood about where the “Red Lobster” stands today.

The white frame Belvedere had six rooms- a bar, kitchen, lobby, main dining room, a dance floor and a small dining room in the rear where industrial executives from Packard Electric, Republic Steel, and



The Belvedere as it looked when it first opened for business.

other local mills and railroads held meetings while dining. Carmen took great pride in his dance floor and kept it shined to the hilt. If the weather was inclement, patrons were expected to go directly to the bar area until the snow had melted off their feet or their footwear was dry.

Carmen’s daughter, *Gloria*, started working at the Bel when she was 14. There were no mechanical dishwashers in those days, so Gloria’s first job was as dishwasher. At times she cleaned shrimp for the shrimp cocktails. Over the years she worked at every job in the business, bookkeeping, payroll, purchasing, waitress, check girl and hostess. In those days, as now a waitress had to be 21 years old before she could serve liquor.

In addition to Jim Fogarty, whom Gloria married in 1942, the bartenders who worked at the Belvedere Club included *Jerry Guy*, *Gil Scarnecchia*, *Dick Mahan* and *Sam Matteo*. *James Wolfe* was a faithful employee from 1942 until the Belvedere Club closed.

Marian D’Amico was head cook and cooked fabulous steaks on an old coal range. In later years gas was installed in the kitchen but Marian still used the coal range when baking hams. Spaghetti and steaks were the specialty of the popular spot. Carmen’s \$2.95 steak was the best in the house.

During the 30’s and 40’s many couples held their wedding reception at the Bel, including Gloria when she married Jim Fogarty in 1942. Jim was in the service then, but when he returned he went to work for Carmen and in 1954 he and Gloria bought the club.

The Belvedere became the favorite “hang out” for many of the local good dancers and it had the biggest and the best jukebox in the area. At one time *Anthony Barberini* was the club organist on Saturday nights and for special occasions. While Carmen was the proprietor, *Gary Glen* and *the Jewel Tones* played for dances and years earlier Carmen’s brother, *Tom Scarnecchia*, had a dance band. When Uncle Tom’s band played gigs, they got paid with a bowl of spaghetti. There were never any problems with the younger people who visited the Bel and generally the restaurant would be wall to wall with people.

The fine restaurant and night club had catered to the public’s dining and entertainment tastes for over 40 years. In 1970 the ground on which the Belvedere Club stood was leased to the Standard Oil Company. When the building was shoved down and buried on July 11, 1970 to make room for the Standard Oil station, even the old coal range was turned under. Progress calls for many changes, but many can still remember the Belvedere Club, fine food and good friends. The Fogarty’s later opened Fogarty’s Inn on Fenton Street and still later on moved to state route 46 in Mineral Ridge where the “Fifth Season” Banquet Hall is now located.

To read more and see additional photographs of the Belvedere.
Visit: <http://www.nileshistoricalsociety.org/belvd.htm>



The Belvedere as it looked prior to demolition. July 11, 1970.

In the good old summertime—*Thelma Snyder*



SWIMMING POOL, WADDELL PARK

RECREATION

With the long dreary winter finally behind us, everyone is looking forward to the summer with its sunshine and even its hot humid days. For many years in Niles that would mean spending hours swimming, sunbathing, and having fun with family and friends at Waddell Pool.

In July 1929 *Jacob D. Waddell*, vice president of Empire Steel Corporation, presented the city with 52 acres of land to be used as a municipal park. It was located just outside the city limits between Park and Warren Ave. and on both sides of Lovers Lane. Mr. Waddell was hailed as “Niles’ Greatest Benefactor” for his generous gift. Plans to improve the land with electricity and sewage began immediately. By June 1930 a new baseball field was dedicated with Mrs. Waddell throwing out the first pitch. It was hoped that a swimming pool might someday be added to the park. The Waddells were the last residents of the Ward-Thomas House now the museum of the Niles Historical Society. Their portraits are displayed there.

With the Great Depression of the 1930’s in full effect the federal government announced a public works program offering to pay 30% of the cost of projects that would give work to the needy. The idea of a swimming pool and bath house in Waddell Park began to take shape. City council applied for \$40,000 under the National Recovery Act. The architects were *Ackley, Bradey, and Nelis* from East Liverpool. The first concrete was poured in Feb. 1934 and work began as soon as construction material arrived. Warren at the time was also building their slightly smaller swimming pool in Packard Park under the same program.



The pool was 100 feet wide and 200 feet long. It ranged from 3 feet to 11 feet deep and held 800,000 gallons of water. An oval-shaped children’s pool was located just north and was 25 feet wide and 40 feet long. It slanted to 18 inches with 9,375 gallons of water. A fountain aerated each pool. The bath house also encompassed the filtration system with the water being tested hourly and meeting drinking water standards. The total cost was \$120,000 including all labor and material.

The pool was dedicated Wed. July 25, 1934. The newspaper stated, “to several thousand swimming enthusiasts of the city, today marks a noted change from an unsanitary dirtied water creek swimming hole to the most modern and up-to-date pool.” *S.J. Bonham*, superintendent of Niles schools, delivered the address. The pool staff was introduced including pool manager, cashiers, checkroom attendants, and lifeguards. The night included a water pageant, diving exhibition, and music by the high school band. A flag donated by Mrs. Waddell was raised. The ceremony was attended by 5,000 people after which 750 made use of the new pool. Niles had one of the most outstanding, modern, and largest civic pools in the state.

Pool hours were from 9:30-9:00. In the morning various groups could swim for free. Monday morning was the only time “colored people” could use the pool. Lou Tabor in his memoirs tells of convincing city administrators to let black citizens use the pool equally since they were taxpayers as well. Tuesday mornings was for children from playgrounds east of Mosquito Creek and Wednesday was for those from the west side. All other times admission was \$.20 for adults and \$.10 for children. Rules included compulsory showers and the exclusion of those with communicable diseases and open sores.

Of course no boisterous play or smoking was allowed. Bathing suits had to be clean, modest, and meet the approval of management. The wearing of swim trunks without shirts was not permitted. That short pool season ended on Sept. 16, 1934. Entrance fees collected totaled \$1,574.70 from 8,325 children and 3,711 adults. Free swimming was provided for 3,816.

Through the decades countless children and adults have vivid recollections of swim lessons, birthday parties or picnics, and day after day of swimming in the pool. Other memories of summer romances, squabbles with friends, and blistering sunburns may have faded. Waddell Pool opened in 1934 and closed in 2014. Although its future is uncertain today, many fondly remember its past.

The Niles Historical Society offers for sale many books about Niles’ History. Visit: <http://www.nileshistoricalsociety.org/bokpg.htm>

Photographs, such as the Waddell Pool images on this page, can bring back memories from your earlier years. Do you have a story or memory that you would like to share? Contact: Anna Marie Beagle or Sandy Bilovesky —email: Curator@NilesHistoricalSociety.org

