

President's Message—*Anna Marie Beagle.*

Good bye 2018. Hello 2019.

December 2018 was a busy month for the Niles Historical Society. The Society once again participated in the McKinley Christmas on December 8. An old fashion trolley transported those attending to the McKinley Memorial, McKinley Birthplace Home and the Ward – Thomas House. Tours, entertainment, crafts and refreshments were enjoyed by all. Admission was a donation of cereal boxes for the Niles Community Services food pantry.

At the Ward – Thomas House visitors enjoyed tours of the House which was decorated festively for the Christmas season by our docents. *Mary Ann McMahon* and *Sandy Bilovesky* provided their Santa Claus collections to decorate the House and the Westenfield Room. Mrs. Claus (*Sandy Bilovesky*) read Christmas stories to the children. The children participated in a "Count the Santas" contest. There were more than 130 Santa's to count.



Mrs. Claus, *Sandy Bilovesky*, reads to the children during The McKinley Christmas events at the Ward-Thomas house.

Annette Batovsky displayed her Christmas china in the dining room. Ansonia clocks from the collection of *Pete Sciullo* were also on display.

Joyce Mahan and *Lynn Gombus* with the help of Lynn's grandson, four year old *Braunson Craft*, decorated grounds and manned the green house selling handmade Christmas ornaments.

In addition to those already mentioned, our docents for the day were *Nancy Malone*, *Anna Mae Cuchna*, *Loren Gargano*, *Carmel Rinaldi*, *Donna Nellis*, *Joan Ries*, *Judy Guarnieri*, *Coleen Tominey* and *Lynda Ralston*. Thank you also to *Thelma Snyder* for publicity, *Katie Bowen* and the members of the Niles McKinley Key Club who were Santa's elves for the day.

The Great 1950 Thanksgiving Snowstorm

"The Thanksgiving snowstorm of 1950 was the biggest in Ohio's history. Nearly the entire state had over 10 inches and most communities in the eastern half of Ohio measured 20 to 30 inches of snow during this storm. As the storm strengthened, winds increased to over 40 mph and a severe cold wave swept the state early on Friday, November 24th dropping temperatures to near zero. The worst storm conditions occurred on Saturday, November 25th as near-blizzard conditions prevailed throughout Ohio. By late in the day, snow reached 20 inches in eastern Ohio and drifts were 25 feet deep.

The storm continued through Sunday and by Monday morning, snow reached 33 inches at Steubenville, 30 inches in Geneva, and 29 inches at Youngstown. Bulldozers were used to clear roads so that ambulances could reach those in need. The Ohio National Guard used Jeeps to transport people to hospitals and to deliver food to rural homes. Wires and trees were blown down by winds as high as 60 mph. Many buildings collapsed under the weight of 2 to 3 feet of snow and much deeper drifts."

Schmidlin, Thomas W. and Schmidlin, Jeanne A. *Thunder in the Heartland: A Chronicle of Outstanding Weather Events in Ohio*. Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1996.



Helen Cost standing on the Robins Theatre marquee, November 1950.

Memories of The Big Snow.

Marsha Hoodin Pedone-Looking across the street at my neighbors, the snow seemed to be as high as our front porches with no dip for the street. My father also pulled me on a sled to Pete's Dairy for milk and bread. We also went to Smith's Dairy on the corner of Cedar and Harris Streets.

Barb Paulik-I loved it when we had all that snow. I remember my mother raising the shade in our hallway and seeing nothing but snow covering the entire window. It was thrilling to me being only 6. If memory serves me correctly, my dad couldn't come home from Mahoning Valley Steel because his car was buried. He ended up walking home.



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 Photographs and Stories links.

Monthly Calendar

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

Membership Meetings

10:00 am First Saturday of each month
Call for private tours to be scheduled
330.544.2143

Officers

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

Audrey John.....Curator
Ralph Tolbert.....Newsletter and Website

Trustees:

Anne Townley, Nancy Malone, and Sandy Bilovesky



On November 5, 2018, clients from the Tony Tamasi Center on North Road in Niles raked leaves at the Ward-Thomas House. It was a "Giving-Back to the Community Project" spearheaded by Julie Blaine, coordinator. They wanted to thank the community for voting for the Fairhaven levies over the years.

Participants were: (not in order of photo) John Aho, Peter Pascale, Marianne Sprankle, Marie Smith, Paul Colla, Danielle Cesene, and Amanda Irwin. They raked and filled 24 bags at the entrance to the house. Many thanks to these hard workers.

Submitted by: Joyce Mahan

Membership

Membership letters were mailed in December. Please consider supporting the Niles Historical Society with your membership. Membership dues provide the funds necessary to support the operating budget for the Society and its programs. The Society receives no public money. Not only is your monetary support appreciated, we encourage your active participation in the activities of the Society.

2019 Calendar Sale

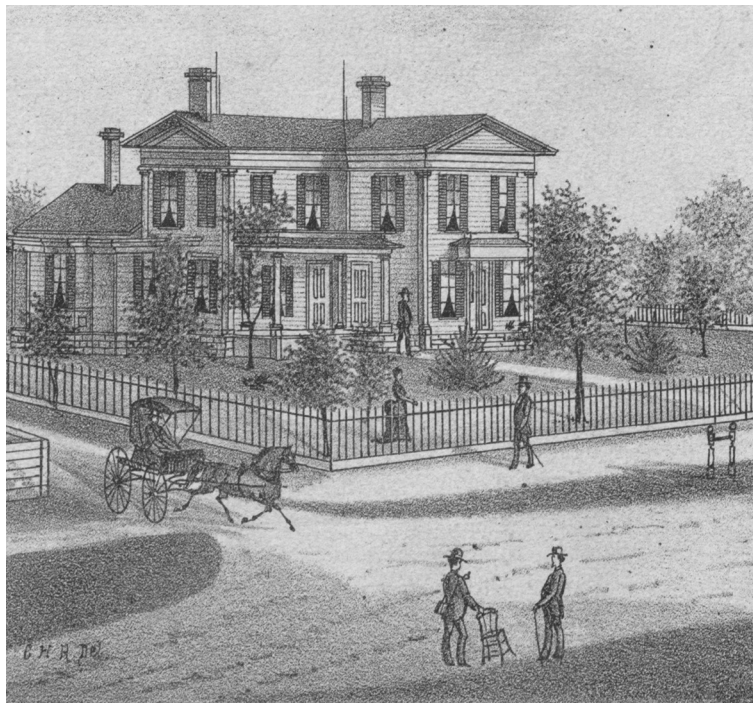
The 2019 edition of the historical wall calendar is available for purchase. The theme is Old Niles Schools, many of which no longer exist. Calendars are \$10.00 and can be obtained by calling Sandy at (330) 652 8329.

Mark Your Calendar:

January monthly meeting and open house are canceled due to the holiday and potential bad weather.

Saturday, February 2, 2019

Monthly meeting, slate of officers to be presented and vote
Yearly budget to be presented



This photo was taken from a drawing in the 1874 Everts Atlas.

Ambrose Mason led the line of Masons here in 1835. He started the first mercantile store with *Josiah Robbins*, who had married Mason's daughter, *Electa*, after the death in 1843 of his first wife, *Maria Heaton*. Maria Heaton was the daughter of *James Heaton*, founder of Niles, who built the first iron furnace in 1809.

In 1826 Josiah Robbins arrived in Niles from Youngstown. He married Maria Heaton and in 1830 took over management of the Maria furnace with brother-in-law, *Warren Heaton*. Warren died in 1842 and the furnace was leased to McKinley, Reep & Demsey.

Judge Ambrose Mason came here from eastern New York and in 1843 was chosen postmaster of Niles, being the only one considered for the position.

Harry H. Mason, his distinguished son, was born in New York in 1819. In 1842 he opened a store also, which served the Heatons, James Ward, William McKinley Sr. and others. He was also assistant postmaster.

H. H. Mason (Henry) who succeeded his father as Postmaster, was the first mayor elected after Niles was incorporated as a village in 1866. He was also a downtown merchant and one of the builders of the Mason block at the southeast corner of Main and State streets.

The residence of H. H. Mason was located on Vienna Ave. in Niles. Mason moved into this homestead in 1859. It was here that he held court and as Mayor of Niles, he earned \$100. a month. He was also president of the City National Bank which was founded in 1893.

Mason house on Vienna Avenue before demolition.



Mason residence shown as it is being demolished. The barrel in the attic would have water pumped up into it to supply water for the shower in the second floor.

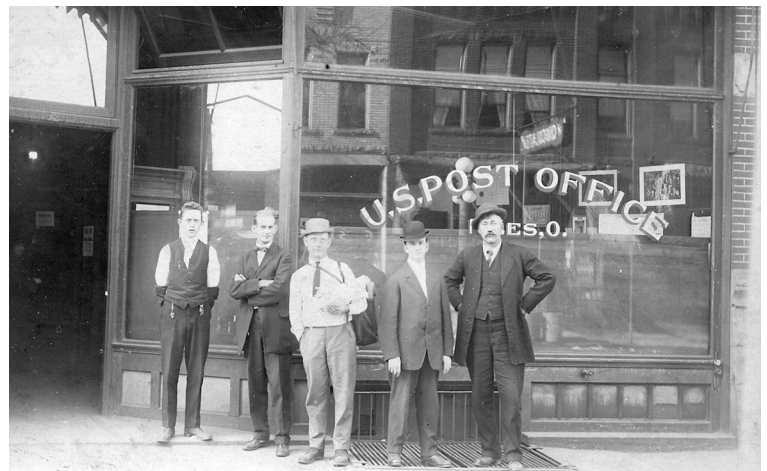


The Mason block or building was located at the southeast corner of Main and Mill (State) Streets. In this early 1900s photograph, *Sol Lowendorf's* clothing store occupies the ground level. All the buildings pictured were demolished during urban renewal in 1976.

The Safety-Service Complex, which houses the Fire, Police, and Municipal Court which opened in April 1977 is located on this site.

Until 1834 the settlement was appropriately called "Heaton's Furnace", but *James Heaton* gave it a new name "Nilestown" in honor of *Hezekiah Niles*, editor of the *Niles Register*, a Baltimore paper, whose Whig (early political party) principles Heaton greatly admired. Nilestown remained the name until 1843 when Postmaster Ambrose Mason for convenience shortened it to "Niles" and that is how Niles got its name."

Old post office near the curve on Furnace and Mill (State) Streets.



Movie Theaters in Niles

From the first time the Warner boys showed silent 'flickers' at Deibel's Grocery on Mill(State) Street in 1896 with their sister, Rose, playing accompaniment on the piano until the 1960s, Niles had a variety of movie theatres located throughout the downtown area.



Exploding film cannisters caused a fire in the Opera House on September 16, 1920. Ben Warner directed everyone to safety. The third floor level was removed when the Warner Brothers built their new theater on the same site which opened in 1921.



The Warner Theatre Building(above) was built as a tribute to their parents and as a mark of gratitude to the community which had given them their start in business. Sadly, the building fell into disrepair and was demolished during the 70's with Urban Renewal in Niles.



The Stafford Theatre was listed in the Burch Directory of 1912 at 125-133 Furnace Street (East State).



The Garden Theatre was a forerunner of the modern drive-in theatre. Movies were shown in the evening, weather permitting. It was located on North Main Street about where Sparkle Market is now (2001). Later on this site, the McKinley Theatre would be built, this theatre closed in 1960.



The McKinley Restaurant and Barton's Dry Cleaners and later Reese's Floral Shop were a part of this building.



The Butler Theatre on South Main Street would later become the Robins Theatre. It also would close in the 1960s. Photo ca 1935.