

President's Notes:

Thank you to all who have renewed membership in the Niles Historical Society. The funds generated by membership dues, additional donations and fundraisers provide the funds necessary to support the mission of the Society.

The 2019 calendar project was very successful. All the calendars were sold. Book sales were very popular during the Christmas season.

The February meeting was rescheduled for February 9 due to the bad weather. The budget for 2019 was presented by Treasurer *Lynda Ralston* and approved by the members in attendance. There will be no change in officers of the Society for 2019. Officers and trustees are listed on the back page of the newsletter.

The Spring Banquet fundraiser is scheduled for Thursday, April 25, 2019 at Ciminero's Banquet Center beginning with dinner at 6:00 PM. Historian *Sean Posey*, author of "Lost Youngstown" and "Historic Theaters of Youngstown and the Mahoning Valley" is the guest speaker. Please support the Society by attending this event. Reservations can be made by calling *Sandy Bilovesky* at 330-652-8329.

Membership:

If you have not sent in membership dues for 2019, 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.

Docents and Writers:

Are you a history buff? Would you like to write an article for the newsletter? Would you like to become a docent for the Ward-Thomas House? The Society is in need of active members to serve as docents and to write articles for the newsletter. Do you have a story of Niles and/or your family that you would like to share? Please contact *Sandy Bilovesky* at 330-652-8389.

Mark Your Calendar:

Saturday, March 2, 2019, 10 AM: Monthly meeting
Sunday March 3, 2019, 2- 5 PM: Open House
Saturday, April 6, 2019, 10 AM: Monthly meeting
Sunday, April 7, 2019, 2- 5 PM: Open House

Thursday, April 25, 2019, 6 PM: Spring Banquet and Fundraiser, Ciminero's Banquet Center (Doors open at 5:30 PM).

Saturday, May 4, 2019, 1PM-2PM
McKinley Birthplace Home, 40 South Main Street, Niles, OH
"Urban Renewal in Niles"
Speaker: *Ralph Tolbert*



History of Lot #216 on Langley Street.

Langley Street was formerly called Railroad Street because it ran alongside the Erie Railroad tracks which are now owned by Conrail.

Located at 242 Langley Street was the office of the Niles Firebrick Company. Situated on the same lot at 242 ½ was the pattern shop where skilled workers created the molds for the custom bricks ordered by mills.(1902-1912)

Between the years 1913-1926, the pattern shop was used by the *Sons of Italy Lodge* and then remained vacant between 1927-1935.

In 1936, the *Bagnoli-Irpino Club* purchased the building for \$2000.00 as the location of their club. The Bagnoli-Irpino Club sold the buildings to *Michael Patrone* in 1946 for \$4000.00.

The building then became known as, the 'Bachelor's Home', from 1946-1980 as Patrone rented to men who worked in the Niles Firebrick plant and other local mills.

From 1980-1994 Patrone used the pattern shop building as a warehouse and the office building as a Historical Research Center from 1970-1994 and also sold antiques from 1993-1994.

The Niles Firebrick Company, located on East Park Avenue in Niles, employed a large percentage of immigrants from the Bagnoli-Irpino area in Italy in the production of brick products used in lining blast, open hearth, and electric furnaces, soaking pits and coke ovens. As the company expanded its operations, more Italians came to the Niles area from the 1880s through the First World War and continued through the 1930s. The last record of Bagnoli-Irpino area immigrants coming to the Niles area was during the period 1955-1965.

One of the first Italians who came to Niles was *Lawrence Pallante*, one of the founders of the Bagnoli-Irpino Club, which organized in 1932. The Italian wives formed the Immaculate Conception of Mary Religious Society.





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



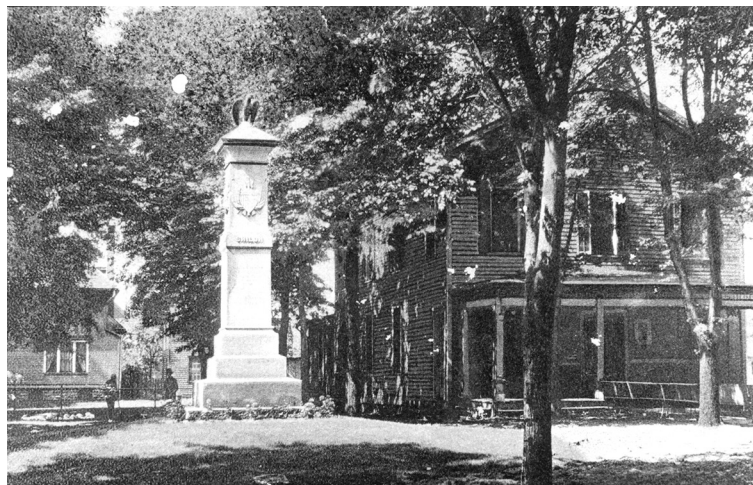
View of McKinley Memorial grounds after the Memorial was built.

The Forgotten Park in Downtown Niles.

Of course you know the location of Waddell Park and Stevens Park and some will remember Central Park and Murphy Park, however most are unaware that there was another park-the forgotten downtown Park.

The Niles' Community Park, home to the 1882 Civil War Monument, a civil war cannon and the Town Hall, was located on the southwest corner of the block where the McKinley Memorial is sited today. The park became part of the McKinley Memorial grounds in 1915 when construction of the Memorial began in November 1915.

When you compare the above two side-by-side photographs, it appears that the Civil War Monument was moved to accommodate the construction of the McKinley Memorial.



View of Town Hall and Civil War Monument from 1914 postcard.
Below: View of Community Park from West Park Avenue and Arlington.

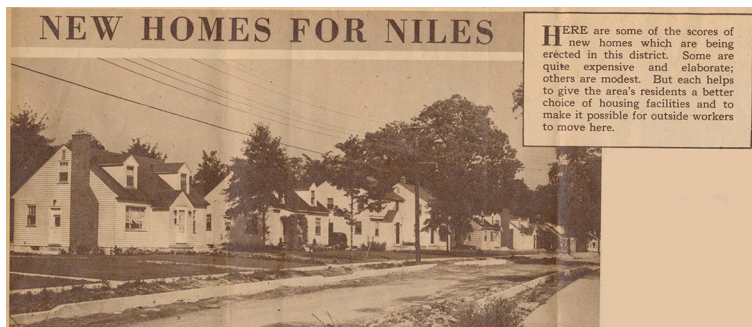


1947 New Home Construction in Niles.

Julianne Bonacker Vargus asked if I would be interested in some old photos and postcards. As a result, her Mother, *Pat Bonacker*, shared the November 2, 1947 Youngstown Vindicator photograph section (Printed in sepia tone as a separate section available on Sundays only).

The photographs below show different areas of Niles that experienced the housing boom that occurred after the end of WW2 and the beginning of the 'Baby Boom'. In most of the images there are no electric lines, telephone poles, sidewalks, or even paved streets. Now that you know when these houses were built, you might want to drive around the neighborhoods to compare the same houses as they look today.

Wade Rose bulldozed and level filled the wooded (swampy ?) area that would become the block from John St. down to Mosquito Creek



A new street, yet unnamed, being developed in Niles' North Side by the Wade Rose construction Company.



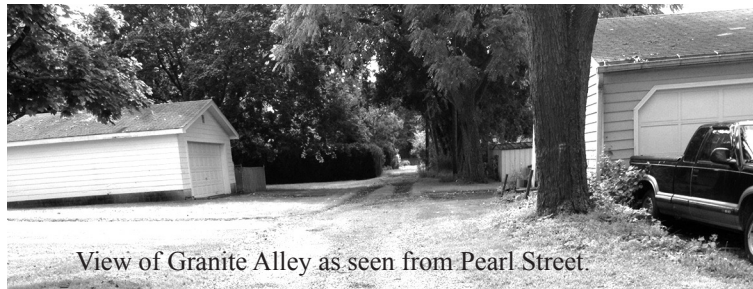
New homes on Arden Blvd. built by Custom Built Homes.



New homes being erected in Wade Avenue, in a new North Side addition, being developed by the Rose Construction Company.



A group of new homes in Frederick Avenue, just off Vienna Avenue.



View of Granite Alley as seen from Pearl Street.

Alleys—A Relic from the Past

When homes were built in the late 1880s, the horses and carriage houses were located at a distance from the main house. Most of the first homes were built on small lots near the downtown area and alleyways provided access from the carriage houses to the main streets. Alleyways later offered access to your garbage cans for pickup.

Even after homes were built on larger lots as the neighborhoods expanded with garages for cars, the alleyways remained. Many homeowners would utilize part of their backyards for a garden and using a 'Burn Barrel' used to reduce the trash with the ashes being scattered in the backyard gardens. Alleys also provided quick access to your friend's homes when traveling on a bicycle and a path to walk to your neighbor's backyard to visit, even though you did not live on the same street.

Alleyways in the northern triangle made by Vienna Avenue and Robbins Avenue.

Between Crandon and Hartzell--Hartzell Alley
Between Bentley and Lincoln--Granite Alley
Between Lincoln and Washington--Coral Alley
Between Washington and Lafayette--Keystone Alley
Between Lafayette and Cherry--King Alley
Between Cherry and Cedar--Long Alley
Between Cedar and Morse--Coal Alley
Between Morse and Beaver--Vine Alley
Between Beaver and Short--Short Alley
Between Seneca and Robbins--Wadeley Alley
Between Leslie and Vienna Avenue--Roy Alley
Between Harris and Robbins--Buckeye Alley

The second section of Niles Alleys is the area south of Robbins bordered by Mosquito Creek and the Mahoning River.

Between Robbins and South --Phillips Alley
Between Gilbert and Robbins--Oak Alley
Between Fulton and Erie--Jackson Alley
Between Fulton and Wood--Drake Alley
Between Jackson Alley and Drake Alley--Keeling Alley
Off Jackson Alley toward Mason--Birch Alley
Off Allison Toward Mason--Charter Alley

The third section is the South Side.

Between First and Third--Diamond Alley
Between First and Third--Cumby Alley
Between Francis and Cumby Alley--Maple Alley

The fourth area covers the downtown area from the Mahoning River to the Conrail tracks.

Between W. Park and Robbins --Pine Alley
Between West State and West Park--Franklin Alley

The fifth and last section was the triangle made by the the Conrail tracks to Vienna Avenue, George, and Wilson Avenues.

Between Vienna and West--Cherry Alley
Off East Federal--Plum Alley
Off West Street between Bond and Federal--Peach Alley
Off West Street between Bond and Evans--Union Alley
Off West Street between Blaine and Evans--North Alley
Information collected by: *Rebecca Archer DePanics*

Joseph Rossi Funeral Home History

Article by: Kathleen Evanoff, Niles Daily Times, June 21, 2006

“*Marie Vross* remembers quite well when her father moved the Joseph Rossi Funeral Home from its first location on Erie Street to Robbins Avenue. “I was five years old and we pushed the furniture up the alley from Erie Street to where we are now.” Marie said.

Members of the Joseph Rossi family are celebrating the 80th year of the family owned business, which began in Niles in 1926 when *Joseph Rossi* came to Niles from Olyphant, PA. Joseph Sr. was born in 1903 and earned his mortuary license 1924. He, along with his wife, *Josephine*, began the Joseph Rossi Funeral Home in a house on Erie Street.



Original Rossi home at 23 Erie Street, 1926

The original funeral home consisted only of an embalming room and casket room.”, said *Joseph Rossi Jr.* In those days we didn’t need viewing rooms because people held visitations in their own homes.

Joseph Rossi Sr. supplemented the family income by delivering milk door to door. When more space became necessary, the family moved to a larger house on Robbins Avenue in 1931, which still only contained the two rooms needed for the funeral home, as well as living space for the family.

By the early 1940s, it was evident that viewing rooms would be a necessity and the first addition was built in 1941. In 1966, the second addition was opened up to even more services for the community.



Rossi Funeral Home expansion, 1941.



Rossi Funeral Home expansion, 1966.

Marie Vross’ education in mortuary science was the beginning of the second generation of the Rossi family to go into the business.

“I took the milk train to Cleveland to go to mortuary school,” she said. Marie, now retired as a funeral director and embalmer, explained that she was the only female in her class in the mortuary school in the 1940s. They all took care of me like I was their sister, she said of her male colleagues.

Marie graduated in 1948 and when Joseph Rossi Sr. died suddenly in 1953, Josephine and Marie kept the business operating along with Marie’s husband, *George Vross*. Josephine Rossi passed away in 2002.

Joseph Rossi Jr. was licensed in 1969, when he joined the family business and now his sons, *Joseph III* and *Thomas Sr.* are licensed funeral directors, receiving their training from their father’s alma mater, the Pittsburgh Institute of Mortuary Science.

Marie’s husband, George, along with Joseph Rossi Jr.’s wife, *Bonnie*, continue to help with the funeral home and its operations. Also helping along the way were Marie’s children, *John Vross* and *Sharon Bayus*. As a family business, every member of the family helped at one time or another in the everyday operation.

Never changing its name since the first generation, the Joseph Rossi Funeral Home is located at 451 Robbins Avenue.”



Rossi Funeral Home expansion, 1980.