

Community partnerships make us stronger!

This year's Heritage Day was a bit different than past events. We discussed ways to attract new interest. The Niles Historical Society was approached by *Dave Petrilla* with a plan to hold a car show in the parking area adjacent to the Ward-Thomas House. As a result, Heritage Day and Wild Wheels Car Show was held on August 18, 2019. The car show drew approximately 85 cars and their owner enthusiasts who displayed their vehicles.

Many of the car show spectators made their way to the Heritage Day events, touring the Ward-Thomas House, greenhouse, Westenfield Room, and barn. The common thread was: "How wonderful!"; "I've never been here"; "I didn't know this was here"; "I'll come back". Objective met!

This year's program included *Amanda Beagle*, New York based vocalist who has recently relocated to the area. A vocal instructor, Amanda and her students, *Kaylynn Thomas* and *Sophia Anness* of Girard High School and *Kennedy Caldwell* of Champion High School performed. Thank you for volunteering your time and talents.



Kaylynn, Sophia,
Amanda and Kennedy

Birds in Flight, wildlife preservationists, introduced their aviary friends to the crowd. *Heather* and *Cameron Merritt* talked of their efforts to care for their injured friends and to return them to the wild. They also talked of what we can do to prevent harm to our feathered friends.



Cameron Merritt

The Steel Valley Ukers musical program was a hit. Over 20 ukulele enthusiasts performed, playing old favorites on their ukuleles and conducting an old fashion sing along with the audience.

Nick Spano gave a presentation on his favorite subject, Niles native, Harry Stevens. *Rick Muccio* created caricatures of patrons in the gazebo and *Ralph Tolbert* presented Niles history in the Westenfield Room. *Mason St. Clair* displayed his Presidential History collection in the barn.



Roz Gadd and caricature
by Rick Muccio

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McKinley Restaurant

The restaurant was located at 9 North Main Street, between the Antler Hotel and Credit Thrift, and had seating for 70 people, not including those patrons seated at the bar. It was owned and operated by *Kemal* and *Julia Sisco Yakop* for more than 20 years. Kemal and Julia are behind the bar in the picture below. Kemal is located on the left, with Julia located in the middle with her hand on the bottle.

In the early fifties, Kemal had the huge muskie he caught mounted and displayed over the bar as a conversation piece.



Photo contributed by Michael Putkovich. Photo late 1940s).

The McKinley Restaurant was fondly known for its home-cooking and delicious dinner specials. It was most famously remembered for Julia's home-made hot dog sauce, with many folks remembering the Lunch Special of two chili dogs for twenty-five cents. With those low prices, it was a common lunch time destination for high school students who would walk over from the Niles McKinley High School when it was located downtown in the former Edison Junior High School.

In 1948, the McKinley Restaurant housed one of the first television sets for public viewing in Niles, with an 18 by 20 inch screen. This attraction drew in large numbers of customers, all leaving well-fed and well-served. The McKinley Restaurant continues to be a fondly remembered landmark in Downtown Niles, and probably will be for many years to come.

Story contributed by the *Michael Putkovich* Family.



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

Gardening News — Joyce Mahan

The Niles Historical Society welcomes a new gardener, *Meredith Elliot*. Thanks to *Dennis* and *Marilyn Quilty* for donating the ferns hanging in the gazebo. Begonias, wintered in the green house, were donated by the McKinley Memorial gardeners and are planted in our gardens this year

With so many rainy days, we have been working in the green house and created a fairy garden. please be sure to stop in and see our four season scenes. Starters from our lilac bush have been planted around the back of the driveway.



Summer camping scene in the fairy garden in the green house.

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Arts and crafts, baked goods by local vendors were displayed on the grounds. There was a scavenger hunt and crafts and games for the children. A Fairy Garden was on display in the greenhouse.

Dave Martin, Joyce Mahan, Lynn Gombos and Teresa Rishel once again invested countless hours, weeding, planting and mulching the grounds of the Ward-Thomas House. Displays were set up in the barn and greenhouse. The docents provided commentary on the house tour and sold publications on Niles history.

Thank you to all who have been mentioned and to: *Nancy Malone, Anna Mae and Cindy Cuchna, Loren Gargano, Sandy Bilovesky, Donna Nellis, Joan Ries, Julia Guarnieri, Thelma Snyder, Lynda Ralston, Coleen Tominey, Pete Sciullo, Nancy Davis, Jennifer Bowman, Brian Fletcher, Diana Bauman, Kay Paajanen and Pedro Bossio.*

A special thank you to *Dave Petrilla* and his volunteers who conducted the car show. The hard work was well worth the effort.

Anna Marie Beagle, President

Calendar of Events:

Saturday September 7, 2019 10:00 AM Membership Meeting

Sunday September 8, 2019 Open House Thomas House 2-5 PM

Wednesday September XX, 2019 Urban Renewal presentation in the Westenfield Room 7-8PM presented by *Ralph Tolbert*

Donations accepted and books for sale

Saturday October 5, 2019 10:00 AM Membership Meeting

Sunday October 6, 2019 Open House Thomas House 2-5 PM

Weddell's Service Station — *Tim Weddell*

I would like to share some Niles history and wish my Grandfather, *Tom Weddell* a very Happy 93rd birthday. My grandfather was raised in Mineral Ridge before meeting my grandmother, *Kay Pollard*, in the early 40's. They married in 1945 after honorably serving in the US Navy in WWII.

My grandfather worked for SOHIO operating stations whose owners were still at war before he opened his first service station, WEDDELL'S SOHIO, at the south west corner of Mahoning Ave and Robbins Ave.

He later moved to a newer SOHIO station on the north east corner North Main Street and West Federal Street in the mid 50's.

While operating the SOHIO stations, he was an active and lifetime member of the Niles Jaycees and former president of the Niles Jaycees, former president of the Niles Chamber of Commerce, former president of the Gasoline dealers of Ohio, served on the board of the National Gasoline dealers of Ohio, and a very active member of the Freemasons.

After 30 years with SOHIO, he moved to a SUNOCO station at the northeast corner of Main Street and Church Street where Fair-Way tire currently operates. He closed the station in the early 80's after 8 years of operation as a Sunoco.

He ran for council-at-large, councilman and Mayor of Niles. Following his run for office, he worked at RMI for 10 years until retirement. He remained very active in retirement participating in numerous golf and bowling leagues.

Tom and Kay remained married for 67 years until my grandmother passed. About 4 years ago he met and married *Marilyn Burchett-Salyers*. They remain in Niles. He is one of the last of America's greatest generation. He has had many accomplishments and influences in Niles and I wanted to recognize his place in Niles history.

Happy birthday Grandpa!



The little boy in the plaid is my father, six year old *Tim Weddell* Niles class of 1968. With him is my grandmother *Kay Weddell* and my grandfather, *Tom Weddell*. . Photo: 1956.



Weddell's SOHIO service station at the corner of North Main Street and West Federal Street. Photo ca 1956.



Tom Weddell greeting Kay and Tim sitting inside a DeSoto.



Tom Weddell's SOHIO at corner of Robbins and Mahoning.



FIRST ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION!

X-TARE and SUPREME GASOLINE

Sohio's Famous Motor Oil
HQD - ESSO - SOHIO and POLARINE

SOHIO 'LUBRI-ONEK' LUBRICATION
The Best 'Lube' Job in Town

Atlas Tires, Batteries and Accessories
Mopar Matic Automatic Adjusting Shock Absorbers

Tom Weddell, operator of Weddell's Sohio Service extends a sincere thanks to all friends and customers who have made it a successful year for him in his new location.

To those who give and get customers ... stop in today, our store of experience and knowledge enable us to give you the kind of car care your car needs and the prompt, friendly service you want. Stop in this week and get acquainted with R.E.A.L. SERVICE.

FREE **FRIDAY & SATURDAY**
ROSES **JULY 2nd and 3rd**
For The Ladies For The Men

ANNIVERSARY WEEK SPECIALS!

FREE **FREE** **\$4**
SHOCK ABSORBER **Air Cleaner Service** **Minimum Trade-In**
INSPECTION WITHOUT **And Springs Packed** **Allowance for Year**
OBLIGATION! **With Each Lubrication** **Old Tires are a New**
Old Tires Must Be in Reasonable Condition. Better Tires, Higher Allowance.

WEDDELL'S
SOHIO SERVICE

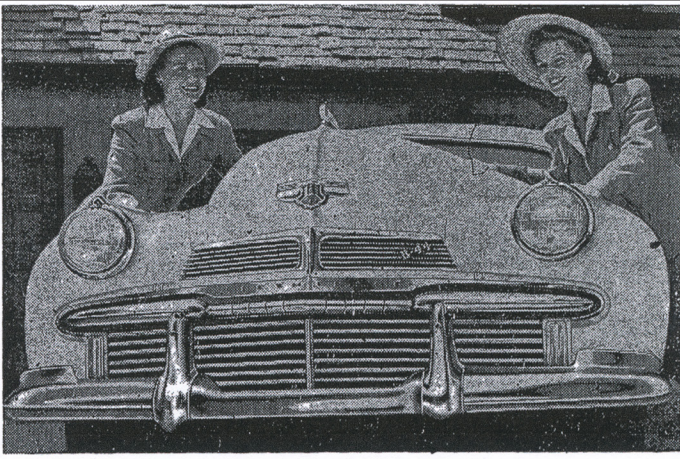
Corner Federal and N. Main Streets NILES

More than gasoline was sold: Tires, batteries, and service repairs.



Candidates for Mayor of Niles—from the two major parties were among the guests at Tuesday's reception held by Phoenix Publications at Mollica's Banquet Center in Niles.

Exchanging pleasantries at the event were, left to right, Democrat candidate *Jack Shaffer* and his wife *Ann* and *Kay* and *Thomas Weddell*, Republican candidate for Mayor.



DEAN & BEST
Announce the
FIRST SHOWING
IN NILES
of the new
1942 Oldsmobile
"THE CAR THAT HAS EVERYTHING!"
at the salesroom
100 FEDERAL STREET

The 'Best' Story — Les Best

Otis Best started fixing cars in 1923 with Harry Mullett, owner of Mullett Motor Sales located at 236 North Main Street. Harry first sold Star-Durant automobiles then later sold DeSoto, Plymouth and the Peerless brands. In 1931 Peerless went out of business during the Great Depression.

In March 1931 Otis Best and Harry Dean formed a partnership, Dean and Best General Repair Shop located at 1121 North Main Street where North Road forms a triangle shaped lot. Later, they moved their repair shop to 100 West Federal Street. (Note, The street address later changed to 100 East Federal when Main Street rather than Vienna Avenue began to be used for mailing addresses).

An Oldsmobile franchise was awarded to Dean and Best in October 1941 at the 100 West Federal address.

As written in their partnership agreement, neither Best nor Dean could buy out the other partner's share of the dealership, so in 1948 Smith-Sherwood bought the Oldsmobile franchise from Dean and Best. Sherwood bought Smith's interest and the dealership became Sherwood Oldsmobile in 1950.

Otis Best had begun working at Stiver Chevrolet on North Main Street as service manager during 1949-1950. Late in 1950, Otis returned to Sherwood Oldsmobile as service manager. Otis' son, Rod Best, also worked at Sherwood Oldsmobile from 1950-1958.

In 1958 Otis and Rod and Rod's other son, Duane, bought 1024 North Main Street, across from the American Legion Hall and on the same side of North Main as Dr. West's Animal Clinic. Rod worked as shop mechanic and salesman. Otis died in 1970 after leaving the shop some years earlier.



Best Auto Service, 116 East Federal Street

Jack Sandman bought the building at 116 East Federal Street and Best Auto Service maintained their business in this building until closing in April 2002.

Rod's wife, Shirley, ran the front office for many years. Les Best, Rod's older son began working in 1968 until reaching college age. Rod's younger son, Doug, also worked at this location and obtained an associate degree in Automotive Sales Marketing.

Something must have been in the Best genetics that caused nephews and cousins to moonlight at the shop turning wrenches and diagnosing vehicle troubles.

Rod Best retired in 1994 while Les and Doug continued the repair shop business until it closed in 2002.

As the years passed, Best Auto Service grew into a community partner. It represented what cities like Girard, McDonald and Niles prided themselves on and seek to be remembered for- being a part of a thriving, trusted family business.

Children would often bring in their bicycles for tire and seat repair, at no cost. Many music stands from local high schools received a fresh coat of black paint in the spray booth. Customers would arrive at 9 AM for a cup of coffee and leave hours later, now caught up on each other's family happenings.

It was not unusual for a customer to answer the phone when all the employees were busy. Best Auto Service cars were in Halloween and Fourth of July parades; even leading the opening lap at Sharon Speedway. Countless cars in Niles wore the recognizable silver "Best Auto Sales" sticker on the back bumper.

Unfortunately, as the automotive industry evolved, small area businesses, like Best Auto Repair, began to feel the pain of a changing economy and competing with super-sized dealers.

After 77 years of serving the Niles' community, their garage doors were closed. The family is grateful for the fond memories and friendships formed over these years.



1948 Oldsmobile on the side of Smith-Sherwood dealership. Page 3