

President's message

Dear Members of the Niles Historical Society:

Our last newsletter reported so many expectations of events planned for the Society. Little did we know that we would not be seeing each other for a while. Our hope is that all of you have been in good health and remain so in this time of COVID-19.

Heritage Day & Car Show has been canceled. With the current economic status it is difficult to find sponsors to fund this event. Monthly membership meetings and open houses are suspended for the summer. The Board will meet to conduct Society business. Any issues can be brought to our attention by contacting me, *Anna Marie* (330) 856 – 5274 or *Sandy* (330) 652 – 8329.

The Grounds Committee continues to maintain the gardens and the greenhouse at the Ward – Thomas Museum. If you would like to help, please contact *Dave Martin* (330) 307 – 6127.

Ralph Tolbert continues to update the website. Please visit the website for more stories of Niles. If you would like to contribute an article sharing family memories for a future newsletter, please contact *Ralph* (330) 651 – 2482.

If you need a gift, please consider a Niles Historical Society publication, calendar or cleaning cloths. Contact *Anna Marie* or *Sandy* at the numbers listed above.

Remember to social distance, wear a mask, and avoid crowds.

If you pray, regardless of your beliefs, please offer up this thought from our childhood. In the words of Winnie the Pooh: "Lets spread Hope here, Love there, Peace and Kindness – Everywhere!

And the world just might be a better place. *Anna Marie Beagle*

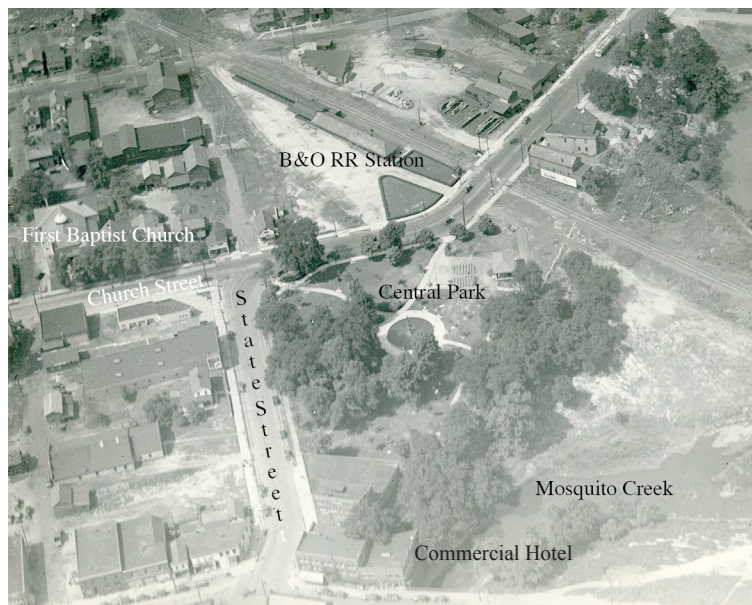
Central Park

Accompanying the pavillion in Central Park was this wading pool and fountain. Central Park was dedicated in October of 1928 in the location where the Central Park Apartments now are across from the Dairy Queen on East State Street. City of Central Park in Niles was located on the site of the old Central School on the corners of State Street and Church Street.



The pavilion, named the Thomas Pavilion was a gift to the City of Niles by *Margaretta Thomas Clingan* and *Mary Ann Thomas Waddell*.

In the middle of the wading pool was the "Spirit of Education" fountain donated by *Mrs. T.E. Thomas*. The wading pool later was filled with dirt and shrubbery planted after the wading pool was drained and the fountain shut off. Continued Page 4



Aerial picture of Central Park in 1933.

The B&O railroad was located on the north side of Church Street. It ran through Niles as early as 1874. It later expanded taking in the Ashtabula & Pittsburgh line and the Painesville & Youngstown line.

The Commercial Hotel was located on the northeast corner of State Street and Park Avenue in the bottom of the photograph.

Paul Lawrence remembers that, "the hotel owners were the *Nicodin* and *Sandru* Families who also owned Johnny's Bar and Voodoo Room which were adjacent to the hotel.

Until the Robbins Avenue underpass was built in 1953, Church Street was the access to Robbins Avenue from the Downtown. State Street did not go through to Robbins Avenue and in fact, Robbins Avenue did not extend to North Main Street.

The 1913 photograph below shows the Erie Railroad overpass and the curve of Church Street as it meets Robbins Avenue. In the background is the waiting station for the trolley cars. Continued Page 4





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
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



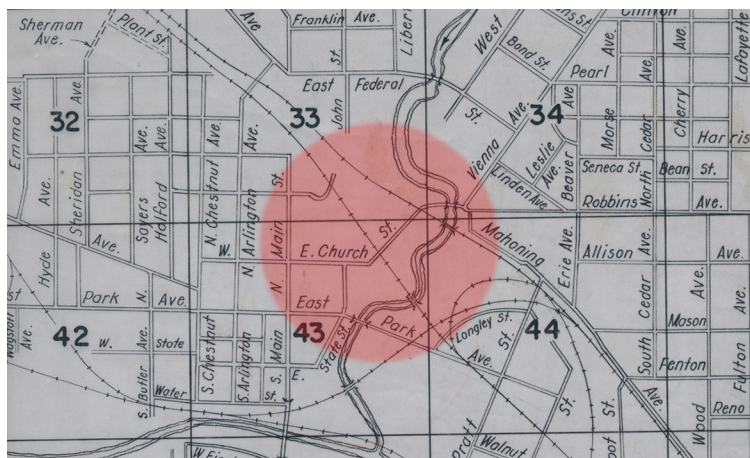
Central Park continued from Page 1.

1931 picture of the Niles City Band in Central Park in the Thomas Pavilion. The band was directed by *Arnold Campana*.

A photo of the band shell that was located in Central Park on the grounds where the first brick schoolhouse was built. The back of the bandshell faces the Mosquito Creek with the Thomas Steel Company visible across the creek.

For more information go to: www.nileshistoricalsociety.org/centralpark.htm

Your Niles Historical Society would like to share your family stories and photographs in our future newsletters to preserve the history of Niles before it disappears. Contact: *Anna Marie Beagle* 330.856.5274, *Sandy Bilovesky* 330.652.8329 or *Ralph Tolbert* 330.651.2482.



Aerial picture of Central Park in 1933 continued from Page 1.

The 1930 aerial map shows the area of Robbins Avenue and Church Street where they intersect under the steel Erie Railroad overpass. At this time Robbins Avenue did not extend to North Main Street.

On North Main Street, both the B&O and Erie Railroad tracks were crossed by vehicles travelling up and over the two tracks. A crossing gate and watch tower controlled the street traffic and trains. This was a dangerous crossing for cars with many accidents occurring until the underpass was opened in 1953.

Bert Holloway (1873-1959).



Bert Holloway was born at Lisbon, Ohio July 1873. He obtained a grammar school education. While earning \$60 a month as train engineer, who shoveled his own coal, he enrolled for a Mechanical Course at the age of 19 on December 1892. He then became superintendent for the City Light and Water Works of Niles for over 50 years.

Bert Holloway enlisted as a machinist in the US Navy during the Spanish-American War. On April 16, 1917, the day the United States declared war on Germany, Bert enlisted

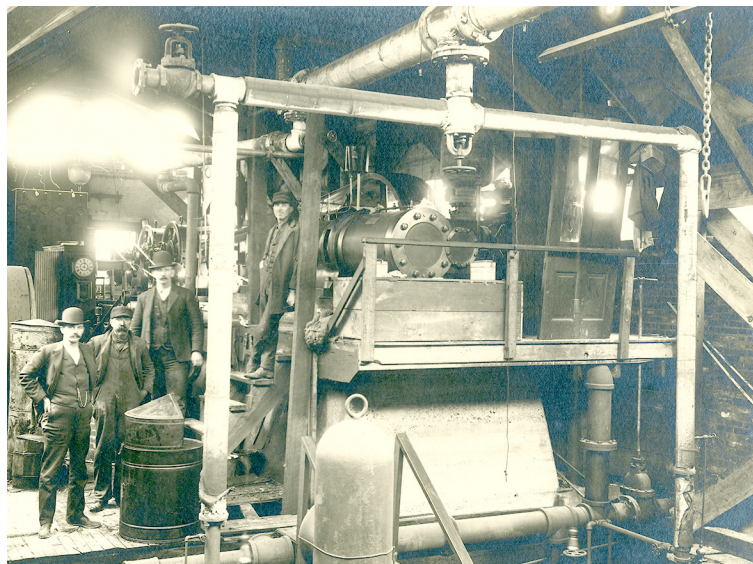
in the Navy as an engineer attaining the rank of lieutenant.. After the war in 1919 he transferred to U.S. Naval Reserve. He tried to enlist in WWII but was not accepted because of his age. He went to NYC and at the age of 70 enlisted in the merchant marines as a lieutenant. At the time of his enlistment, he was the oldest man to serve in the second World War. It wasn't a desk job either, he shipped on convoys to both England and Italy. On the convoy to Italy his ship carried TNT.

As superintendent of Niles Water & Light Dept. from 1903 - 1953, Bert Holloway exerted a guiding influence over the development of water and light improvements in Niles, including acquisition with Youngstown of the source of water from Meander Reservoir. His term of service was continuous from 1893 except for periods of enlistment in the U. S. Navy in the Spanish American War, World War I and World War II.



Raising the Niles City Water and Electric plant in 1905.

Before 1891 residents had to supply their own water from cisterns collecting rain water, or dug wells and later drilled wells. In 1891 the first city waterworks was constructed at the foot of Butler Street. The source was drilled wells, one in 1900 being 49 feet deep and 30 feet in diameter. Use of untreated river water in 1910 caused some typhoid fever, necessitating the boiling of water. In 1912 a filtration-purification plant went into use, but by



City Water & Electric Plant interior in 1905. L to R: Bert Holloway, Jack Mathews, P.R.R. foreman Joe Clark and P.R.R. foreman Mark Walsh.

1920 industrial waste and raw sewage made the Mahoning River an unfit and even dangerous source of water.

Returning in 1919 to the city as Superintendent of Water and Electricity, he found the City Water Department pumping an excessive amount of water and as soon as possible authorized the inspection for leaks of all services and plumbing fixtures connected to the Niles Water System. The cost of this survey was money well spent, as some yard hydrants were found with no equipment to close them off and a large number of toilet tanks running water continuously. "Water was cheaper than plumbing repairs." It was evident that in order to operate the water department efficiently, it would be mandatory to install water meters on all services. The next procedure was to sell to, or convince the water customers and city authorities that metering was the proper and equitable method of charging for water use.

After a thorough study of the domestic water situation and his findings the following recommendations were made: In order that an adequate, safe and dependable water supply may be provided for the present and future growth of the City, and as the factor of safety of the present water system is about zero:

- 1..... A new source of supply.
- 2..... A universal water meter system.
- 3..... Repair and covering of settling basins.
- 4..... Chemical storage and mixing room.
- 5..... An additional high service pump.
- 6..... An additional low service pump.
- 7..... More high service reservoir capacity.
- 8..... An additional water line to south side.
- 9..... A twenty-four (24) inch water main on Robbins Avenue.
10. Numerous water main extensions.

In 1925, construction of Meander Dam was recommended. Seven years passed before it was accomplished. The costs dismayed some officials and residents. For a time, Niles and Youngstown appeared to be in dangerous competition for the project. Niles had optioned the dam site and Youngstown much of the needed watershed land. The solution: joint development.