

President's Notes:

It is a sweltering 90 plus degrees in Northeast Ohio. Hope you are all enjoying your summer. There is much activity at the Ward – Thomas property. *Lynda Ralston*, our treasurer, has taken on the Westenfield–Carriage House project. Lynda is spending countless hours researching, obtaining quotes and watching over the project. When completed, the Westenfield Room will be a great meeting place, suitable for public gatherings and historical presentations. Lynda deserves a huge thank you.

Mr. John Millik performed the insulation of the Westenfield Room. He rebated the fee charged by donating \$500 for a life membership and by purchasing a Society publication. Thank you, Mr. Millik.

The Society is currently assessing repairs needed for the barn. Falling tree branches have caused damage to the barn's slate roof. The City crews have been out cutting back the trees that extend over the barn. We thank them for their rapid response.

Quotes have been obtained for repair of the slate roof. The dollar amount of repair to the slate roof is minimal compared to the cost to repair damage to the rotting eaves, gutters and cupolas. The cost of the repair is just under \$17,000. Quotes to maintain the 4 chimneys on the house roof are anywhere from \$6,000 to \$20,000. Go figure...Then there is the greenhouse ...a never ending story!

Any donations toward these projects will be greatly appreciated.

After a year's neglect due to COVID, work is being done on the grounds. Shrubbery has been trimmed and work on the flower beds will be next. The Society doesn't have the volunteers it once had to take care of the landscaping. Therefore, we have to hire out this work.

The Victorian Garden which *Joyce Mahan* and *Lynn Gombos* have taken care of for years has been unattended due to illness. If there are any garden club members or anyone who likes to dig in the dirt, who would like a project, the Society needs your help.

The Erie Railroad Depot picture of WWII draftees was supplied by *Sandy Ciminero Bilovesky* from her uncle *John "Sharkey" Kosance* collection. If you can identify Mr. ?Parker or the "unknown" in the picture please contact Sandy at 330-652-8329.

Anna Marie Beagle, President

The Barn, built in 1862, is one of our treasures.

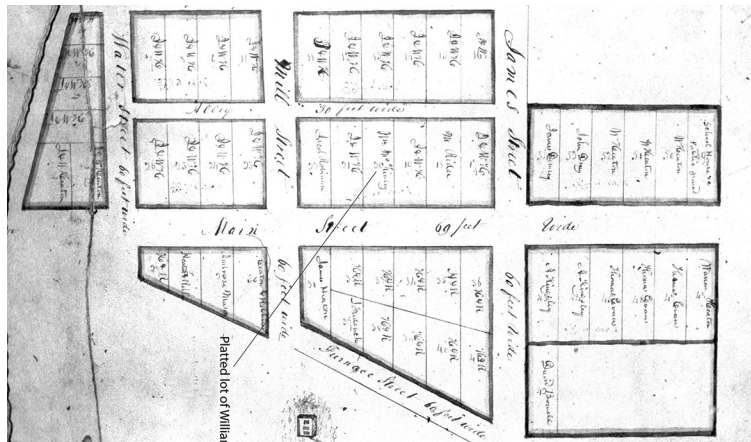


This image shows the post and beam construction that was typically used in building farm structures in the past.

The barn is a wonderful teaching tool to illustrate skills no longer used in today's world.

The barn houses many artifacts found in use in the 1880s and up: wash tubs, push lawn mowers, sewing machines, tools.

In addition to showing what a barn looked like, it is also a display area for visitors to view the history of everyday items used daily.



One of the Niles Historical Society's images used for the StoryWalk. An 1847 map of Niles showing the lots platted downtown by *James Heaton*.

Origins of the Stevens Park Story Walk.

In 2019, Niles third graders were treated to a field trip during the month of May. They toured the M^cKinley Birthplace Museum and Memorial, M^cKinley Memorial Library, M^cKinley Birthplace Home, and Ward-Thomas Museum. They also visited the Niles Wellness Center, where they enjoyed an activity run by the Parks director and ate hot dogs in honor of *Harry Stevens*.

The trip gave the students a taste of their own local history (literally). In 2020, COVID-19 made the field trip impossible. Third graders missed an important experience that would have helped them connect to the past, understand the present, and dream about the future. In early 2021, it seemed unlikely that in-person field trips would resume by May. We didn't want another group of students to miss out, so we improvised.

November 2020 saw the installation of the Stevens Park StoryWalk, a joint project of the library and the Niles Parks Department. The StoryWalk consists of 18 signs, each containing one page of a children's book. Children and their families stroll through the park, reading the book as they go. The StoryWalk has garnered attention and support within the community, and memorial donations in honor of lifelong library patron *Mary Steib* are being used to purchase books for the StoryWalk. A new book is installed each month. The StoryWalk provided an opportunity to share Niles history in a new way.

For the month of May 2021, we used information from the third-grade tours to create a Local History StoryWalk. *Anna Marie Beagle* and *Sandy Bilovesky* from the Niles Historical Society created five pages about the city's early history. Director *Ami LeMaster* from the M^cKinley Birthplace Museum and Memorial made five pages describing William M^cKinley's campaigns and presidency.

With feedback from the library's Adult Services Manager *Carrie Kibby* and Youth Services Manager *Carlie Adams*, I used the remaining pages to the discuss M^cKinley's early life and share information about the library. Carlie also provided coloring books and crayons for children who visited the library after seeing the StoryWalk. Library Director *Michelle Alleman* and Niles Parks & Recreation Director *Mark Pallante* installed the StoryWalk. The StoryWalk allowed us to share Niles history with the entire community—third graders included. We're only sorry we couldn't feed them hot dogs, too.

By—*Audra Dull*, Public Services Librarian & M^cKinley Birthplace Home Coordinator.



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	Officers
Museum 'Open House' The first Sunday of each month, 2-5 Last tour begins at 4 pm	<i>Anna Maria Beagle</i>President <i>Dave Martin</i>Vice-President <i>Lynda Ralston</i>Treasurer <i>Coleen Tominey</i>Secretary <i>Ruth Van Huffel</i>Corr. Secretary
Membership Meetings 10:00 am First Saturday of each month Call for private tours to be scheduled 330.544.2143	<i>Audrey John</i>Curator <i>Ralph Tolbert</i>Newsletter and Website Trustees: <i>Anne Townley, Nancy Malone, and Sandy Bilovesky</i>

Bosco's will be opening at the Eastwood Mall. The company has provided a means for non-profit organizations to raise funds to support their mission. The Niles Historical Society was given 250 passes to sell for \$5.00 each. Your donation gets you the exclusive pass to the Grand Opening. 100% of your donation is retained by the Niles Historical Society. The organization with the most passes presented at the Grand Opening Day has a chance to earn an additional \$500 - \$1500.

GRAND OPENING CHARITY DAY

SHOP FOR A CAUSE

BOSCO'S EASTWOOD MALL

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2021

10 AM – 10 PM

YOUR \$5 SHOPPING PASS GIVES YOU

- Exclusive Advanced Access
- The chance to be first to shop the Grand Opening Specials
- Free Refreshments and Entertainment
- A Free Gift just for shopping and Register to WIN Prizes

Passes may be obtained by calling Sandy at 330-652-8329 or Anna Marie at 330-719-5716 or at any Niles Historical Event prior to October 7, 2021 or by mailing a request and \$5.00 to:

Niles Historical Society
P.O. Box 368
Niles, OH 44446.
Your pass will be mailed to you.

Calendar Events:

Open House: Sunday
August 1, 2021
2:00-5:00PM
Last tour at 4:00 PM
Meeting: Saturday
August 7, 2021, 10:00 AM

Ralph Tolbert's presentation:

"In Memoriam: The History of Niles Street Names" is available to view on YouTube at: <https://youtu.be/JDFRfxR1ZJc>



The Erie Railroad Station on Mahoning Avenue shortly before it was demolished in 1981.

Erie Railroad Depot Demolished. (continued from page 2)

The last passenger train to board paying customers here was the Youngstown-Cleveland commuter service. It made its last runs on January 14, 1977. Prior to that, such Erie-Lackawanna passenger trains as the Lake Cities, Atlantic Express/Pacific Express and the Phoebe Snow called here. The last of those was the Lake Cities, which was discontinued in January 1970.

A wrecking crew made quick work of the old Erie Railroad Depot on Mahoning Avenue Monday morning, closing another chapter of Niles' prosperous history. For many, the end of a familiar brick structure came as inevitable-not a pleasant thought but one that was bound to happen.

"We realized it was going to go...but we didn't know when," explained Niles Historical Society President *Nancy Sandin* Monday afternoon.

"The society had at one time entertained the thought of moving the depot and restoring it to its former grandeur", she said, "but in reality the project would have been too costly, among other factors".

The fact that the building was brick would have made moving it virtually impossible, unlike a wooden structure, and there would also have been the problem of where to put it.

Zoning inspector, *Melvin Rose*, who issued a demolition permit to Asphalt Specialists out of Girard last week, said that the building was in "fairly decent" shape and that it was structurally sound, however, "there wasn't much that could be done with it", he said.

Its location, at the intersection of Mahoning Avenue and Pratt Street, was ideal during the railroad's heyday but that any thoughts of restoring the building at its present location were slim. One discouraging factor was the lack of adequate parking space, but then the depot was built when trains were a popular means of travel.

The depot, which apparently was built in the early 1900s, was a source of pride for Niles in those early days. Local history books proclaim that during the heyday of passenger trains, the Erie station on Mahoning Avenue was the "most luxurious" in Niles and it was considered a fine example of 19th century (ed. Western Stick) architecture.

On behalf of the Niles Historical Society, Mrs. Sandin said, "The society feels very badly about it. It bothers me that we couldn't do something," referring to depots in other communities that have been restored into quaint restaurants and shops.

The depot was located on Conrail property and it was the railroad company's decision that the structure be finally torn down. Conrail did not make public Monday the exact reasons why or future plans for the site, if any. The building inspector said the demolition by Conrail was done voluntarily.

Niles Daily Times..... December 18, 1984
Robin West, Assistant City Editor

Refurbishing the Carriage House.

By—*Lynda Ralston*.

One of the out buildings behind the Ward-Thomas House is the old carriage house. Over the years, this was used to store carriages used by the Wards and later the Thomas family. It was later utilized as a garage for cars. After the Niles Historical Society took over the property, the 800 sq. ft. carriage house was adapted as a meeting room (the Westenfield Room) and as a location for some of the artifacts that cannot be displayed in the house. However, the building was never insulated; as a result, we have had to clean mold from it repeatedly.

Once again, the Westenfield room has developed a problem with mold. It is currently unusable even for our monthly meetings due to the mold and musty smells. We needed to stop this deterioration. Therefore, we have begun a project to fully refurbish the Carriage House.



The first step in the project was to remove the mold and fully clean the inside of the building. All items inside the room were cleaned and temporarily stored in other buildings. The mold in the room was then killed, after which the room was repeatedly cleaned using soap and water. That step has been completed. Next, the building is being insulated and brought up to current codes and a dehumidifier added. Since this will cause damage to the drywall, the room will be repainted. As a final step, the existing carpeting is being removed and will be replaced by a floating floor of high quality vinyl with a wood appearance. The cost of this project is estimated to be \$15,000 and will be paid out of the Capital Improvement Fund.

Finally, we will evaluate how to best utilize the space for storage and displays and the stored items will be returned to the room. Once the mold problem is dealt with, we can refurbish the room as a display and multi-use area. It might support meetings, presentations, fund raising programs, etc...

This project is expected to be complete by Heritage Day.

Please come and visit our newly renovated Carriage House. Page 3



Old Erie RR Depot. The New Lisbon branch RR, incorporated in 1864 and opened in 1870, ran from Niles to New Lisbon and merged in 1872 into the Cleveland and Mahoning Valley RR. It was leased to the New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio railroad which built this frame station (1872) and in 1880 became part of the Erie RR. The station was located on Mahoning Street (formerly Depot Street) just west of Pratt Street. Around 1915 the station was demolished when the Erie railroad replaced it with a larger brick station.



The American Railway Express operated at the Erie Railroad Depot on Mahoning Avenue in Niles, Ohio. *Charles Robinson*, carrying a pistol in a holster, is featured with his horse and delivery wagon. Goods that arrived at the station would be delivered throughout the city.

The Erie Railroad Station – Origin and Demise

M^cKinley Memorial Birthplace Committee Secures a New Erie Depot
Headline in the Niles Daily News Tuesday May 26, 1914.

Conference last week in New York Brings about desired result.

Niles Man may be thanked for new improvement.

Harry M. Stevens of this city—the real promoter

Youngstown and Warren outdistanced in the securing of accommodations for traveling public—Site will soon be decided upon.

“It is given out today from an authentic source that Niles is to have a modern depot which will be the gift of the M^cKinley Memorial Association decided upon at a meeting held at the office of *John G. Milburn* in New York City last Friday.

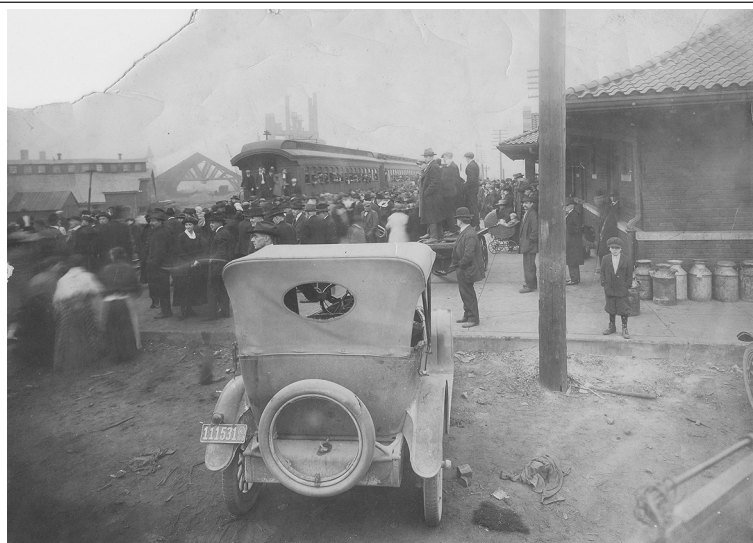
During his last visit to his home in this city, *Harry M. Stevens*, while in conference with *C.S. Thomas* of the Board of Trade and *W.A. Thomas* of the M^cKinley Birthplace Memorial Association, divulged the plans which he had perfected whereby the city could procure a new Erie depot that would be in keeping with the progress of the city when the group plan of buildings around the Memorial is perfected. Messrs. Thomas were impressed with the solution offered by their fellow townsman and agreed to attend a meeting with *Fred Underwood*, President of the Erie, at any time Mr. Stevens would arrange. At this meeting, *J.G. Butler*, *W.A. Thomas*, *Wade A. Taylor*, *Harry M. Stevens* and *Chas.S. Thomas* were in attendance with Mr. Underwood, General Manager of the Erie and also *Attorney Orcutt*, head of the legal department.

During the meeting, which was held Friday, Mr. Underwood gave the Nilesites to understand that it was solely through the influence of his friend, Mr. Stevens, that he had accepted the offer of the Memorial Association and consented to the changes which will be necessitated by the acceptance of the proposal made by the Association.”



This brick station, opened in 1915, was located on Mahoning Street (formerly Depot Street) just west of Pratt Street. It was the most luxurious in Niles, constructed of brick and was a fine example of 19th century Western Stick architecture.

This station was demolished in 1981.



Niles draftees entering the service are seen boarding a train, September 21, 1917, heading to *Camp Chillicothe* for WWI. Photograph was taken at the Erie Railroad Depot on Mahoning Avenue in Niles, Ohio.

Richard Harris—My grandfather, *William Harris* and his brother *Frederick Kent Harris* were on this train. Frederick Harris is seen left-of-center, next to the woman with the white collar.



WWII draftees standing in front of the Erie Railroad Depot, November, 1943: *John Kosance*, *?Parker*, *unknown*, *Jim Petrilla*, *Raymond Sanfrey*, and *Joseph Guerra*.