

President's Message:

Happy Spring to all! We have been enjoying unusually pleasant weather in Northeast Ohio. The crocuses are blooming and the daffodils and tulips are poking their noses toward the sun.

The membership drive for 2021 is ongoing. Thank you to our returning members and new members for your generous donations.

The Society met on February 13, 2021 at the McKinley Memorial Museum Auditorium. Our thanks to *Ami LeMaster*, the Museum Director, and its board for providing the space. The audit of 2020 monetary activities and the proposed 2021 budget were accepted.

The Niles Historical Society has been recognized for its activities by two organizations.: *Paul Shaker*, PHD, NHS Class of 1965 and trustee of the Nader Family Trust (NFT) informed the Niles Historical Society of activities of the NFT. *Robert A. Nader* who served the Mahoning Valley as councilman, representative, common plea and court of appeals judge, formed the Nader Family Trust upon his death in 2019. A goal of the NFT is practicing philanthropy in Trumbull and Mahoning counties. An early manifestation of this effort is an advertising campaign that promotes leading cultural institutions in the areas' new on-line publication, *Mahoning Matters*. An advertisement promoting the Niles Historical Society is being run in a rotation with other public service announcements.

The Society was also one of ten Trumbull County history-based organizations chosen to participate in The Trumbull County Ohio Treasurers Initiative: Telling Our Stories. This project is funded in part by the National Endowment (NEH) to the Humanities Preservation Assistance Grant FY19, awarded to the Trumbull County Historical Society (TCHS). The NEH initiative is in preparation of celebrating the Nation's 250th Anniversary in 2026. The first goal is to identify items that shed light on our national identity and to begin planning for future projects. A site visit took place and an inspection made of the Ward-Thomas property buildings and collections. Strengths and weaknesses were evaluated and suggestions made to improve the collection and the property. Any member who would like a copy of this report can contact me at 330-719-5716. The report will also be posted on the Society website.

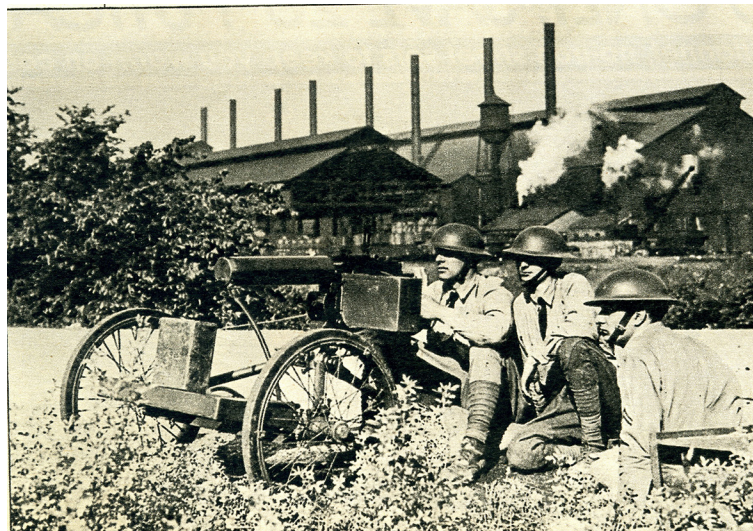
Anna Marie Beagle

Volunteers are needed: The Society has a strong membership basis. However, we are weak on volunteers. There are approximately 15 active members. The Society requests that each member access what talents can be utilized for the operation and future of the organization. Besides grounds keepers, the Society could use your writing talent for the Newsletter, educational skills, organizational skills for fundraisers and knowledge of architecture and building structure to help plan improvements to the facilities. Expertise in grant writing is sorely needed.

Little Steel Strike Airlift of 1937

By *Robert G. Pushkar* Air & Space Magazine July 2001

On the eve of Memorial Day, 1937, in the small Ohio town of Niles, strikebreaking was lifted to new heights. In the skies over Republic Steel's plant, there began an airlift to rescue company employees locked inside during "the Little Steel Strike," one of the most turbulent and bloody in labor's long struggle to unionize workers.



Niles steel strike picture from [Cleveland Plain Dealer](#) showing armed National Guard soldiers maintaining order at Republic Steel

Republic Steel president *Tom M. Girdler* had created a Maginot Line with other "little" steel companies—Bethlehem, Inland, National, Youngstown Sheet and Tube—to stave off trade union formation by the newly formed Steel Workers Organizing Committee, a branch of the Congress of Industrial Organizations. Big Steel, as the industrial Goliath, United States Steel, was known, recently had agreed to recognize the union. To Girdler, this was nothing less than betrayal and capitulation. He was ready for war. On May 20, he shut down Republic's Massillon mill. Six days later, the SWOC ordered a strike against Republic and Sheet and Tube operations. Strikers formed a heavily armed picket line around the plants, blocking people and supplies from entering and loyal employees from exiting.

After hearing that 2,600 employees were holed up with almost no food or supplies in the Niles and nearby Warren plants, Girdler hatched a scheme to send them sustenance. "We were going to fly it!" he wrote in his autobiography, *Boot Straps*. "Airplanes were the only answer."

The first aircraft to be made available, a Waco biplane, belonged to a company employee. Bread, ham, beans, and canned salmon were packed into padded sacks. On the first attempt, two sacks landed outside the Niles plant fence and fell into the hands of union pickets. But a second drop successfully landed 10 sacks, and Girdler's employees were soon eating.

That afternoon, Girdler arranged to buy four used Wacos, the nucleus of a fleet that eventually consisted of seven cabin Wacos and two open-cockpit models. Four of the eight pilots were Republic employees. Flights originated from a secret base, Great Lakes Airport, 50 miles north of the mills. It took 200 workers to unload supplies off a convoy of trucks and reload them onto aircraft. Continued on Page 2



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

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In 1978 the home was sold to *Curtis and Diana Behner* and they purchased the piano from the Taylor heirs so it could remain in the house. Twenty three years later they donated the piano to the Ward-Thomas Museum when they sold the home in 2001.



The square grand piano donated by the Behners from the Taylor house is located in the library of the Ward-Thomas Museum.

Calendar of Events

The Society will resume activities on a regular basis in June. Plans will be made to celebrate Heritage Day in late August or early September.

Membership Meeting:

April 17, 2021, 10 AM at the McKinley Memorial Museum Auditorium to allow for social distancing.

Victorian Tea:

May 16, 2021, 3 PM at the McKinley Memorial Museum Auditorium (A collaboration with the McKinley Memorial Museum is in the planning stages).

Niles History Story Walk: Month of May, Stevens Park

In collaboration with the McKinley Memorial Library a Niles History Walk is being developed for display in Stevens Park.



Frank P. Burke, 98, passed away in December. A life-long resident of Niles, Frank was involved in every aspect of city life from his religious affiliation, youth programs and service programs. A loyal member of the Niles Historical Society, Frank attended membership meetings and supported NHS projects till the recent pandemic. The Society would like to create a memorial for Frank on the Ward – Thomas property. If you would like to support this endeavor, please send your donation to: Niles Historical Society, P.O. Box 368, Niles, OH 44446.

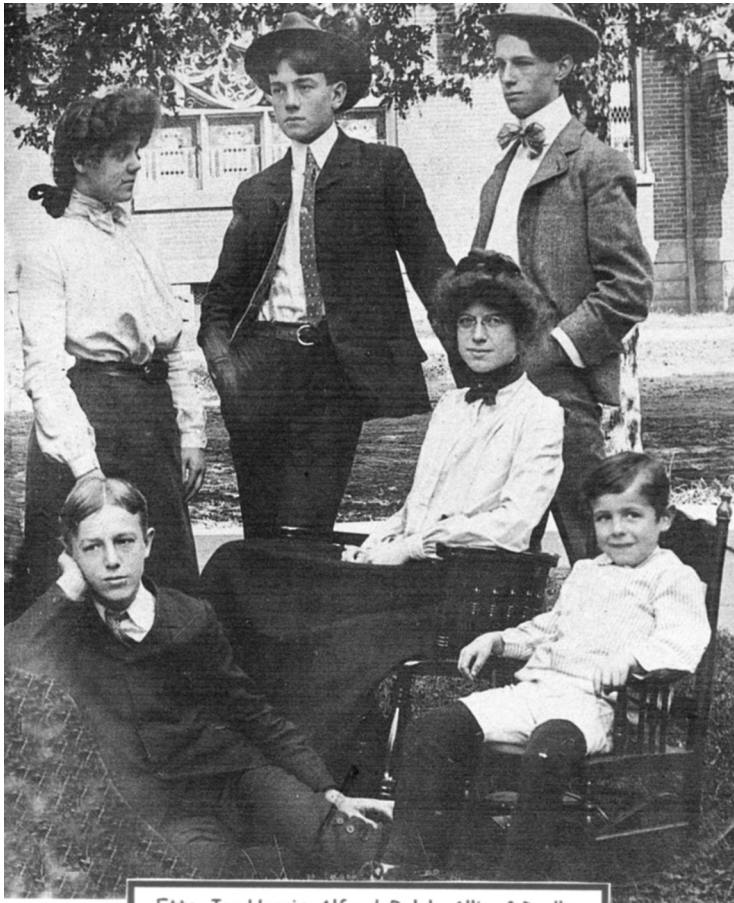


George and Hannah Taylor residence at 50 North Arlington Street

The Taylor Residence and Piano Story

George and Hannah Taylor lived on the corner of North Arlington and Church Streets in Niles, Ohio. The home was built in 1871 by George J. Taylor, secretary of the Home Federal Savings & Loan Association for many years. The house was built when the street was still known as Mechanic Street. Mr. Taylor was featured in the 1934 Centennial edition of the Times as Niles' oldest active businessman at 85 years of age,

The home featured a music room where the piano was showcased beneath a beautiful leaded and beveled glass window. The Ahlstrom Square Grand Piano #2322 was purchased for the children of the Taylor family.



Etta, Jay Harris, Alfred, Ralph, Allie, & Dudley
Children of George & Hannah Harris Taylor,

Photograph of the Taylor children taken on the front lawn of their home on Arlington Street with the First Christian Church in the background.

The pictures inside the home provide us with a view of life at the turn of the century and appreciation for those who preserved a part of that past history.

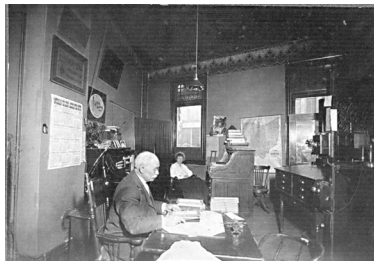


As was common in homes built during this time period, elaborate and decorative wood oak trim can be found in the entrance doorway with leaded and beveled glass, fancy fret work and massive sliding doors separating the main rooms. The oval photo on the wall is *Dudley Taylor* at age five.

The staircase has a landing with a window providing natural light to flood the stairwell and note the craftsman lamp on the first floor pedestal.



The kitchen cabinets, base and top, are all oak with window and door casings having capped lintels.



February 1917, *Allie Taylor* in background with George Taylor, at Home Federal Savings Bank located in the Hartzell Building, built 1889, corner of Main and State Streets, Niles, Ohio.



Loading bags of food into plane

Company representatives tried to get Ashland County sheriff *Frank Wallett* to deputize workers, but he refused, saying, "That would drag me into it."

Republic was able to keep the whereabouts of its base of operations concealed for a time. Two weeks into the strike, however, the company was denied landing rights by Cleveland Mayor *H.H. Burton* and forced to seek another airport. A 50-acre private field in Ashland became Republic's new base.

Management ordered a pine board landing strip to be built next to the rail yard at the Warren plant. From dawn to dusk for 28 days, Republic's fleet of Wacos shuttled tons of food and supplies into the factories.



Five aviators and Mr. Dye, Safety Director.
Back: *Swineford, Pratt, and Hunt*. Front: *Groat and Mood*.

Witnessing a new brand of strikebreaking, the Steel Workers Organizing Committee responded with counter-measures. It sent its own airplanes skyward on "scouting missions" to thwart the airlift—in effect, to attempt an air blockade. Records don't identify the union aircraft, but the Youngstown Vindicator reported: "The union planes did a few stunts in the clouds in their 'maneuvers' calculated to frustrate 'enemy' attempts to bring new supplies to the workers."

On the ground, strikers resorted to violence. Men hid in trees and ditches and opened fire with rifles as the Wacos wobbled toward their destinations. Every landing was a feat. Pilot *Frank Groat*, an electrician and part-time pilot hired by Republic, remembered volleys of gunfire as he eased his Waco toward the

airstrip. "Every now and then you could hear the bullets whizzing by you as you flew into the mill," he recalled from his home in Florida. "We never shut off the engines when we came in. We landed, men came out to unload the planes, and we took off. In Niles they used a big net to catch the supplies when we flew over. On those flights we took a second man along, a 'bomber,' we called him. He threw the supplies out through the door."

On June 2, an open-cockpit Waco slammed into a lumber pile alongside the Warren landing strip, bounced into the air, struck a boxcar, and crashed. One wing was broken off and the landing gear badly damaged. The pilot, who was not identified in the Vindicator, walked away with slight bruises.

By June's end, the Little Steel Strike collapsed. The Steel Workers Organizing Committee failed to organize workers and



View of Niles Republic Steel Plant guard house

ordered its men back to work without a contract. Ten people had been killed and a hundred wounded in the "Memorial Day Massacre" clash between strikers and police at Republic's South Chicago plant.

Republic pilots had delivered 200,000 pounds of supplies. "In buying these airplanes, in flying food and supplies to the beleaguered plants," Girdler said in *Boot Straps*, "Republic Steel Corporation was simply taking care of its own."



Adult men l-r: *John Nicholas* (1877- 1953), *Arthur Nicholas* (1881-1960), *Samuel Nicholas* (1888-1965), *William Nicholas* (1879-1926), child on left is *William Martin Nicholas* (1913-1984) child on far right is *Robert Nicholas* (1918-1944). Three children in center not known. Photo taken behind home at 118 Lincoln Avenue owned by *Ann Richards Nicholas* (1838-1914) who is the mother of all four adult men in photo. Photograph follows 1328 Robbins Article, Jan-Feb 2021 newsletter. Page 2