

President's Message

Hope you are enjoying the weather.

Membership responses are still being received. The Society thanks you for your support. We are in constant search for 'Active members'. Share your talents with us. Areas in which you could help: docent, historian, writing talent for the newsletter, grant writers, gardeners, fundraisers, program development and ground maintenance. Or... just share your stories of growing up in Niles with us.

The Board of Trustees will be reviewing the constitution and policies of the Society. The constitution was revised in 2016. However, there are areas in which we are not compliant. The review will most likely result in reorganization of duties and changes as to how the Society operates.

The never-ending saga of upkeep of the Ward-Thomas property finds the Society in dialogue with the City of Niles concerning repair of the barn roof. The slate roof is beyond repair and must be replaced. Next issue will be the maintenance of the green house. The aged buildings on the property are in constant need. The Society is a tenant. In the past the Society often assumed responsibility for minor maintenance of the buildings. However, it is past the point where we can bandaaid the building issues. The City will have to decide what it expects to do with the property. The Society does not have the resources to constantly direct toward property repairs and stay true to its mission.

The Niles Historical Society will participate in Harry Stevens Day sponsored by Avenue and Main on July 3, 2022 in downtown Niles. A display of Society information and historical books will be available in our booth.

—Anna Marie Beagle



Greenhouse during refurbishing and after the work had been completed.

The Niles Historical Society received a grant to refurbish the greenhouse in 2005. The work involved the removal of all of the glass panels, cleaning the metal rails that held the glass, repainting the panels, caulking the inserted glass. The greenhouse building was also refurbished with removal of the peeling paint and a new coat of paint.

The greenhouse is again on the list of items that are in need of repair. The project cost is estimated to be in excess of \$20,000.00

J.D. Waddell—Industrial and Civic Leader.



Portrait of Jacob Waddell, well known industrialist and husband of Mary Ann Thomas. Photo taken about 1929.

Jacob Dilger Waddell, well-known industrial and civic leader, was born on a farm in Brookfield Township, Trumbull County, July 7, 1870, the son of *John* and *Catherine Richert Waddell*.

His mother was Alsatian by birth. His father was born in Adria, near Glasgow, Scotland and was nine years old when, in 1852, his parents brought him to the United States.

Extracts from the history of Youngstown and Mahoning Valley compiled by *Joseph Butler* contain the following excerpts about Mr. Waddell.

"Jacob spent his early life on a farm and supplemented his education in the district schools, with a year in a business college at Meadville, Pennsylvania."

"He learned stenography and for a year was in the office of the division passenger agent of the New York, Lake Erie, and Eastern railroad company, first at Warren and later at Youngstown".

"With this exception, his mature career has been identified with iron and steel. His first training in the business was under *James A. Campbell* of Youngstown."

"For two years he was with the Falcon Iron and Nail Company at Niles under Arms Brothers, four years with the Mahoning Valley Iron Company at Youngstown, four years with the American Sheet Steel Company whose headquarters were in New York City and four years as secretary-treasurer of the Empire Iron and Steel Company which later became the Empire plant of the Brier Hill Steel Company. Youngstown Sheet and Tube later bought out Brier Hill." 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	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>

Continued from page 1 "Until 1916, he was general manager of sales of the Brier Hill Steel Company. He resigned from Brier Hill to organize in 1916 the Mahoning Valley Steel Company, becoming its president. He sold the controlling interest in Mahoning Valley Steel to *W. Aubrey Thomas*. Mr. Waddell is now a director in the company."

The Waddell plant was built in 1902 by *Wade A. Taylor*, *Charles S. Thomas* and *John O'Dea*. It was then known as the Empire Iron and Steel Company. It was operated by these three men until early in 1906 when it was sold to *Jonathan Warner* and associates. In 1910 it was sold to Gary Iron and Steel Company, and soon afterward was sold to the Brier Hill Company. It then went into the hands of the Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company and in 1924 was sold to Mr. Waddell and associates. In March 1928, the Waddell plant became a part of the Empire Steel Corporation, of which Mr. Waddell was made vice-president and secretary-treasurer."

After the Niles Bank Company was formed, Mr. Waddell was named president; he had been a secretary and director of the Niles Trust Company.

He is a Knight Templar; has received 32 degrees of Scottish Rite; is affiliated with the Al Koran temple of Mystic Shrine in Cleveland; is a member of the Dusquesne club of Pittsburgh; a member of the Union Club, Cleveland; of the Youngstown and Warren country clubs; and Trumbull Club of Warren.

At the present time he is president of the board of directors of the Mahoning Valley Sanitary Water District; he figured prominently in the construction of Meander Dam.

Mr. Waddell became president of the Niles Chamber of Commerce when it succeeded the Board of Trade in 1919.

He married *Miss Mary Ann Thomas*, daughter of the well-known *John R. Thomas* (Niles Firebrick Company).

Land for a city park was donated by Mr. Waddell on August 7, 1928. The original gift included a 52-acre tract, and two months later he supplemented the donation with an additional 23 acres to the west of the original grant. This extended the land between Warren and Park Avenues from the city limits to the Erie Railroad tracks and included avenues. The park was named Waddell Park. This article appeared in the Niles Daily Times centennial edition, 1934, page 34.

Calendar of Events:

Business meeting:

Saturday, June 4, 2022 at 10:00 AM

Open House:

Sunday, June 5, 2022

2:00 – 5:00 PM, Last tour at 4:00 PM

Harry Stevens Day:

Sunday, July 3, 2022

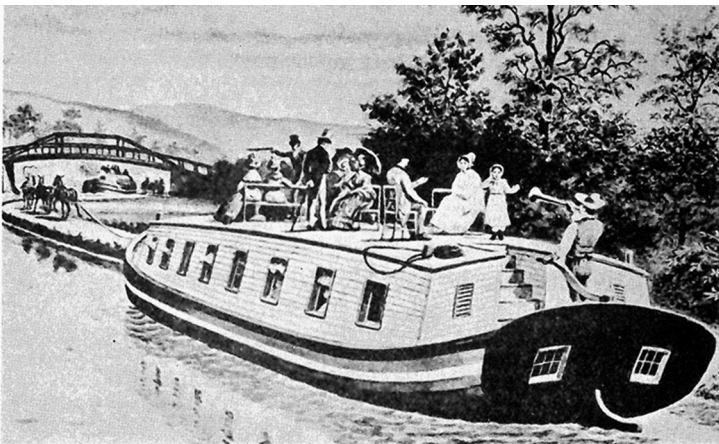
The Ohio–Pennsylvania Canal — *Sandy Bilovesky*

Prior to 1840 there were very few road connections from Youngstown to Warren and points north and west. The Mahoning River was the main focus for carrying goods and traveling. It was used to transport salt from the Salt Springs outside of Niles in canoes and flatboats. In 1840, those villages along the river were excited to hear that a canal was to be built that would open travel between Cleveland and Pittsburgh.

A survey was certified by the State of Ohio in 1823 for an eighty mile canal route that would go from Akron, Ohio to New Castle Pennsylvania. The proposition failed because of the complexities of crossing state lines. A private canal company was brought in by both states and then the state delegates determined to have this company fund the canal. The route followed the Cuyahoga and Mahoning Rivers east from Akron, Ohio to Mahoningtown, Pennsylvania. In Trumbull County the canal wandered through Newton Falls, Warren, and Niles.

The construction faced numerous challenges and was briefly halted in 1837. The state of Ohio was facing economic problems due to the Panic of 1837. Also at this time was the occurrence of a cholera epidemic in which a number of workers died. The canal was finally completed in 1840 with fifty-four locks, nine dams, two aqueducts, and fifty-seven bridges. There were toll offices in Warren, Youngstown, and Akron. On April 3rd, 1840, the “Mohawk” canal boat from Pennsylvania and the “Tippecanoe” from Warren went the whole length of the newly named Pennsylvania and Ohio Canal. By 1844 it was noted that passenger count was up to 8,500 and coal tonnage grew to 114,000 tons.

The boats were 16 feet long and ten feet wide with the large boats carrying 15 tons of freight and 60 passengers. They were pulled by two mules along a towpath. Some of the passenger boats were very fancy with bright paint and gild. There were a few that had kitchens, salons, and dining rooms. They stopped at cities along the river so that passengers could shop and picnic.



Erie Canal Packet Boat, 1840 Era.

The image above features a typical packet boat. Because it was usually hot and stuffy in the cabin in the summer time, passengers commonly sat on deck, what little there was of it, or often on the roof.

The old canal bed ran in back of St. Stephen's cemetery in Niles. The boats followed the Mahoning River from the Beaver River easterly to Niles. The canal left the Mahoning River south of the cemetery in a separate canal channel to Warren, then it went west to Cuyahoga Falls. The canal was a driving force for commerce along its route. It was noted that in 1855, *James*

McRoberts helped unload the first canal boat that carried a load of rails. That was to be seen as the beginning of the end as the railroads would soon be taking over transporting goods and people. The *Perkins brothers* of Warren purchased the canal in 1854. It was abandoned in 1872 followed by closure in 1877.

The Cleveland and Mahoning Railroad owned by the brothers sold the Pennsylvania and Ohio Canal right of way that became the Pittsburgh and Western Railroad in 1884. The abandoned towpaths were then used for graded routes when the railroad took over. These routes helped determine the lay of the railroad tracks.

Niles Railroad History



View of the Pennsylvania Railroad passenger station, freight station and Niles Firebrick. The tracks follow along the Mahoning River.

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.

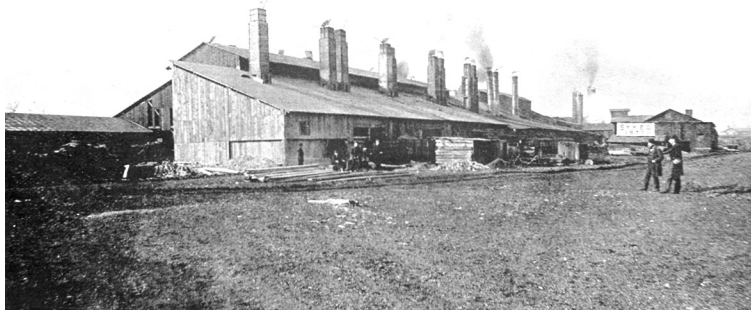
The B&O railroad was located on the north side of Church Street. It ran through Niles as early as 1874. It later expanded taking in the Ashtabula & Pittsburgh line and the Painesville & Youngstown line.

The 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.



Aerial view of the B&O freight station and mainline tracks. The bottom of the image shows the Church Street curve that connected with Robbins Avenue after passing under a small stone bridge.

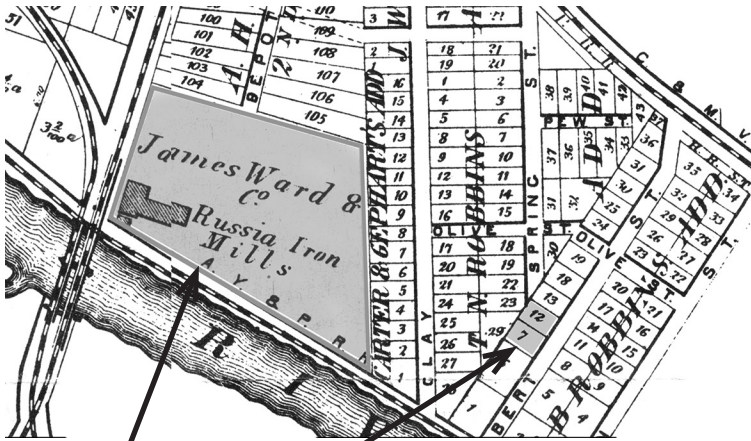
How 'Russia Field' District in Niles Received Its Name.



Photograph of the Russia Sheet Mill with Sykes 1877 visible on the building in background. Copied from a picture in a souvenir pamphlet by Sykes Steel Roofing Co. of Chicago & Niles in 1893.

In 1867, James Ward II sent a man to Russia to study the process of manufacturing 'Russia iron', a high grade and highly finished product much in demand by stove manufacturers, and very expensive after importation. Upon a favorable report, Ward and Company constructed the Russia Iron Mill and attempted to duplicate the Russian product.

This plant, according to a map of Niles in 1874, was located on the north bank of the Mahoning River just east of the Lisbon branch of the Erie Railroad, and south of the present Niles Steel Products Company. It was the first company to be located at a considerable distance from the original industrial sites along the (Mosquito) creek near its confluence with the (Mahoning) river.



The Russia Iron Mill location is identified in light gray as well as the location of Bert School with area streets named.

The Russia mill brought Niles much publicity since here was manufactured for the first time in the United States a certain kind of iron much used and valued. Around this mill a settlement of workers sprang up and people referred to it as 'Russia Field'.

After a time, the Russia Mill was taken over by the Summers Brothers and Company and later by Sykes Steel. The name 'Russia Field' still clings to that district.



A donation from *Bill and Arleen Fischer* was a photograph of 'Bert Street School' which was renamed Monroe School in 1920 when all the schools were given President's names. It was built in 1905 and had only four classrooms with grades 1-4 and was attended by children living in the 'Russia Field' district. It stood facing South Belmont Avenue near the Olive Street intersection.

After fourth grade, pupils would go to South Bentley School, also renamed in 1920 as Jefferson School. Monroe School was razed in the 1960s and pupils transferred to Jefferson School. Bert School was built by Bill's grandfather, *Adam Fischer*.

Nick Saula wrote the following information about Bert Street School. He said, "the name Bert was named after the son of the Robbins family who owned practically all of the land from the Mahoning River to Robbins Avenue. It seems that when they started to build roads in that land, they named streets after their children, other streets were named 'Ann', 'Carle', and 'Clay'. Later, when the street was extended, the city changed the name from Bert Street to Belmont Avenue".



School children at Monroe School 1948-49, *Marie Hofius*, teacher.

First row: *Dora Cogan, Janet Jerina, ? , Frances Marcellie, Irene Szekey*, and *Alta Holbrook*.

Second row: *Carol Yuhaza*, last boy in 2nd row, *Alex Szekey*

Last boy in 3rd row standing is *Edward Ryznen*, *Carl Jones* back row left side.

Visit our website: <https://www.NilesHistoricalsociety.org>