

President's Notes: July – August 2023

"Lazy Days of Summer" so the song goes. I don't know about "lazy"! We are all very busy.

The Society would like to acknowledge *Ralph Tolbert* for his work in compiling the stories for our newsletter. Ralph has also added many tales of Niles history to the Society website, www.nileshistoricalsociety.org.

Thank you to our recent contributors of stories to the newsletter.: *Dave Birkovich, Terry Green and Gloria Theodore*. The Society encourages our readers to share a story with us.



At this time the Society acknowledges the passing of Attorney *Douglas Neuman* on May 13, 2023. Attorney Neuman was a longtime member and supporter of the Niles Historical Society. He performed oversight of all legal issues for the Society at no charge. Our sympathy to his family. A life well spent and gone too early.

<https://lawyers.justia.com/lawyer/douglas-j-neuman-esq-494942>

Attorney Doug Neuman

The Society continues to oversee and maintain the Ward – Thomas property. Work continues on the barn and greenhouse. The Victorian Garden near the greenhouse is in need of a major overhaul. Any help with maintenance and planning is greatly appreciated.

In the month of July there will be no open house scheduled. Tours for groups will be scheduled as requested. We have frequent requests for private tours from those visiting the area, various organizations and church groups.

Please call *Sandy* (330) 652-8329 or

Anna Marie (330) 719 -5716 to schedule a tour.

The Society will have a Yard Sale on Saturday, September 23, 2023, 9:00 AM– 3:00 PM.

Donations will be accepted on Thursday, September 7, 2023 from 10:00 AM–2:00 PM and Friday, September 8, 2023 from 3:00–6:00 PM.

Please deliver household items, games, toys, tools, etc. to the Westenfield Room.

We do not accept clothing. Thank you for your donations.

McKinley Heights Memories Part 4.

1984 Times Special Edition–By *Mary Jane Steffey*

Going South from the corners toward the city limits of Girard, we find Biviano's floor covering and antique store which started in business in 1954 and expanded to its present capacity in 1957. It has been in business continuously at the same spot.

At the Girard limits there is another neighborhood tavern, The Beer and Keg. Across the street, Fruehauf Truck Trailer Sales straddles across the line of Girard and McKinley Heights. Two other truck terminals adjacent are Tauro's Dump Truck Service, who hauls slag, sand and gravel. The other terminal is the C C C truck terminal, which rents commercial trailers.

Finelli's provides the necessary plumbing and heating know-how in any emergency. They are presently in the same building as Bianco Marine. They have taken care of plumbing services for many years.

Although most of the business establishments are centered on Route 422, going West on Robbins Avenue, *Dean Dravis* has been operating a tonsorial parlor for men for over fifteen years. Since long hair for men and boys has become popular, Dean fills in the time between their hair cuts fixing lawn mowers. In the same building are the Wing Kitchen and Bath Contractors. Across the street Milady can receive the latest in hair styling and coloring, manicures, and beauty supplies at Raphael's Beauty School and Supply House. Students have graduated from this school to become managers and operators in the best salons in neighboring towns. The school has been in operation for seven years.

Joe Palermo has been in the tire business next door to Raphael's. He has been servicing and selling tires for cars, trucks, and heavy equipment for thirty years.

Lawson's has opened a new convenience store within the last year, and an older business – Honda of Niles Motorcycle Sales and Service has opened under new management. There is also Rossi's Used Car Lot.

At this end of McKinley Heights, the neighborhood bar is the Robbins Avenue Lounge.



The McKinley Heights Trailer Park was the first one in the area, it had been in this location since 1953. Photo dated 1976.

An entrepreneur by the name of *Ralph Robinson* interested a Salem industrialist, *Sam Keener*, to develop a park and sales for Mobile Homes on Route 422. Part of the original Campbell farm, which in 1950 belonged to the *Woolsey* family was purchased and space for 48 mobile homes was provided. The park opened in 1952. Mr. Keener died in 1955, then it was turned over to his son-in-law, *William Butler*, who expanded it to its present capacity of 220 mobile homes. The park contains 9 streets and covers an area of 14 acres.

In 1972 the park was sold to *Ernest Fleck*, former owner of Fleck Pontiac. The park boasts of a new and modern laundromat and dry cleaning establishment opened in 1976 by *Daryl Gordon* of Warren. *Mr. Robert Duganne* is the present manager. There are many residents who have lived in the park many years, but Mr. and Mrs. *Henry Webber* moved here in 1953, and have lived here continuously since then. Mr. Webber at one time helped to manage the park.



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

Westenfield Room
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

Audrey John.....Curator

Ralph Tolbert.....Newsletter and Website

Trustees:

Anne Townley, Nancy Malone, and Sandy Bilovesky

Mrs. Winston– Dave Birkovich 2023

A finger of Liberty Lake used to run along Oakwood Avenue in McKinley Heights. At the end of it was the house that *Mr.* and *Mrs. Winston* lived in. They had a son who sometimes came to visit. I barely remember the son.

The only name that I ever heard Mrs. Winston call her husband was “Sweet Heart.” She would say, “I have to fix supper now because Sweet Heart will be coming home soon,” and sure enough, he would come walking down the road, from the bus stop on Route 422. I think that he worked at the Leather Works in Girard.

I believe that Mrs. Winston was once the housekeeper for the woman (Lulu Mackey) who managed McKinley's house when it was in the Heights. She had a spinning wheel that may have come from the house.



Original McKinley furniture and artifacts collected by Lulu Mackey.

Mrs. Winston hated snakes. She would carry a pistol with her that she used to shoot every snake she saw. Then she would hang them from the trees around her house as a warning to other snakes to stay away. It did not work. She always found more snakes.

Imagine walking a down a narrow dirt road and back in the woods was a house with dead snakes hanging from the trees around it and a little old lady comes out onto the porch and invites children to come in to have cookies and milk. It sounds like the beginning of a horror story, but it was just the opposite. She made really great cookies!

Mrs. Winston loved her chewing tobacco. My Aunt Libby remembers her sending the neighborhood kids to the grocery store to buy it for her. I guess that kids could buy tobacco back in the day.

What Mrs. Winston is remembered for the most is her fishing. She would sit for hours in a folding chair along the edge of the road and sing or hum to herself while she fished in the lake. She would spit tobacco juice on her bait. She said that way the fish knew it was her. That worked. She always caught a mess of perch, and then she would say, “I have to fix supper now because “Sweet Heart” will be coming home soon.” She was so famous for fishing, that people called this part of the lake Winston's Bay in her honor.

The City of Girard bought Liberty Lake in 1995. The City of Girard drained Liberty Lake.

Winston's Bay and Mrs. Winston are gone now and I miss them both.

To view photographs of the McKinley Heights Museum, type the website below into your web browser.

<https://www.nileshistoricalsociety.org/Mckinleyhousemuseum.htm>

Russia Field Baseball Champs

– Gloria M. Theodore (wife of Teddy Theodore)

Many here in Niles may recall various experiences with the Russia Field Market and its owner, Phillip Theodore. The market was located at 750 Belmont Avenue, in Niles, at the corner of Belmont Avenue and Olive Street in the 1930's.



Phillip Theodore and his two sons; Teddy and younger Constantine.

Students and younger children may remember how Mr. Theodore, known as “Phillip the Butcher,” would slip them an extra piece of candy or two along with the candy they purchased for 1 or 2 cents.

Mr. Theodore also “carried” quite a few families in the Russia Field area during some of the Depression Era in the 1930's by letting people build up charges for food and supplies—many of whom never paid off their bill.

Among the (Russia Field) memories would be the days that relatives, neighbors, and friends looked forward to the few yearly lamb roasts when all could gather for that special summer picnic fun day.

The Theodore family resided at their three bedroom ranch home at 740 Belmont Avenue next door to the market. On the other side of their home property was the Monroe School Building. The family consisted of: Phillip, the market owner; his wife, Zoe “Zita” Zafirou; and their two sons, Theodore “Teddy” Phillip Theodore, and his four-year younger brother, Constantine “Gus” Theodore.

Mr. Theodore also sponsored a summer league baseball team which at one point experienced and enjoyed the glory of being the Champs in 1951. Most of the team members were from that same neighborhood, and according to one of the team members I recently spoke with, they became the “Talk of the Town” with their special red team jackets and their victory.

Mr. Theodore's ownership of the Russia Field Market ended when he sold it in the early 1960's to the *Cikosh* brothers



Team jacket for the Russia Field Market 1951 Champions.



Close-up of jacket emblem.

Facebook comments about the Russia Market team photograph.

Brian McGuirk

“Last person in second row is *Monte Bond*. He played football, basketball and baseball for Niles M^cKinley and was drafted by Cleveland Indians class B farm league in 1957.”

Diane Cikosh Cross

“My dad was raised on Carle Street and worked at Russia Field Market as a kid, then bought it along with his brother Mike in 1963. I don't remember it ever having the awning. It's now Niles Table and Chair! Lots of memories.”

Ace Medovich

“Don't forget Freddie's Market on Olive Street, AKA Medovich Dairy, Tassone Dairy, right next door to Russia Field Market.”

Karen Johnson Fisher

I lived at 740 Belmont. I knew the Market as Bimbos.”

Diane Cikosh Cross

“Bimbo is my Uncle Mike Cikusa, my dad's brother.”

Reminiscences about my father, Andrew J. Leitch

By Harriet E. Leitch, September 6, 1963, Part 1.



Dr. Andrew J. Leitch

My father was born in the County Donegal, Ireland, January 22, 1848. He was named Andrew, very likely for an uncle, *Andrew Leitch*, who settled in Charlottesville, Virginia where cousins lived. The J was an initial only, he added it after he grew up. He came to the United States when he was four years old and lived in Ohltown, Ohio on a farm. This is partly under water now as the Meander Creek was dammed to make the Youngstown, Ohio water

supply. I never knew whether he was naturalized, just took for granted he was young enough to be included with his father, if his father took citizenship. I know he voted regularly, was a Democrat but never voted for Bryan. When I was a small child he took me with him and showed me how to vote. Once he took me to the Court House in Warren and let me watch a jury trial which he explained.

After receiving a diploma from Western Reserve Medical School, he started to practice medicine with *Dr. H.M. Landis*, who later had a son *Robert*, a noted T.B. specialist in Philadelphia. In 1881 he married *Ella Matilda Ward*, a young school teacher. Niles was a small town with a blast furnace and a steel rolling mill. They employed many Englishmen who received good wages and were some of the leading citizens, as were many Welsh. There were some Irish and a settlement of Italians in Russia Field (we pronounced it "Roosha"). As the leading physician of the town, he was called upon day and night. We were often awakened by someone pounding on the door or the side of the house trying to waken him. He never hesitated to go out at night and said the only thing he feared was dogs so he carried a cane. He had no use for a revolver and said the best weapon for attack was a baseball bat so we took him at his word and put one under his bed. A general practitioner was an internal medicine man, an obstetrician, orthopedist, public health officer, and skilled in minor surgery.

The first office which I remember was in a building on Furnace Street, next door to the house we lived in and in which five of the children were born. About 1892 we moved to Chestnut Street and lived there until the *Reeves* house on Park Avenue was purchased about 1896. Paul was born there.



Leitch Residence at 234 West Park Avenue.

One of my first recollections was a fire which destroyed most of the business district, beginning on Main Street and extending around the office where the paint was scorched. This office building was later moved through the town to Main Street near Park Avenue, we rushed home from school to ride in it and wave to our friends. In 1893 an office building, the Reeves – Leitch block, was erected on Furnace Street and "the handsomely arranged" (Niles newspaper) office was on the second floor until father stopped practicing on account of his health. He bought a steel mill in Hammond, Indiana with *Mr. R.G. Sykes* who lived in Niles and owned a roofing company. This mill was purchased soon afterwards by the Steel Trust, which became U.S. Steel. The purchase cancelled plans for moving the family West. After the sale of the mill he returned to Niles and became President of the First National Bank. One time I stopped in at the bank and he allowed me to hold \$50,000, as he was signing money issued by the bank.

He was a public spirited citizen and was a early member of the School Board. Before I was born, he went to investigate a well on one of the school grounds. As gas was suspected a lighted paper was dropped down the well. After no results, he leaned over and received the full explosion in his face and for some time it was feared that his sight was destroyed.

In the summer when we were on vacation from school, if he had a call to make in the country, Mineral Ridge three miles, Ohltown five miles, Lordstown seven miles, he would call and tell the child whose turn it was to go on a ride to come to the office. If she was not at home, I often went, even though out of turn. He could not sing nor carry a tune and often said the only song he knew was the Star Spangled Banner because everyone stood up. As we rode along the dusty roads, he would ask us to sing, perhaps it was one way of keeping us awake on the warm, sunny afternoons. Often after school I would stop at the office to see if he was making any calls and go along and sit in the carriage or the sleigh.

At one time some cousins of grandmother's from New York were visiting us and we learned that some of the Porter cousins in Newton Falls had a pony for sale. We could not rest until the guests left and father with two of us went to see the pony which he bought. There were five or six Porter children and each had to take a last ride. *Punch* was a small Indian pony which Robert rode and the rest of us drove in a small phaeton which had been specially made.

My great grandfather, Andrew J. Leitch, was a doctor in Niles, Ohio in the early 1900s. I wanted to pass along these memories of him and his wife, Ella, which were written by their daughter *Harriet Leitch*.

—Elizabeth Rowan



Punch the pony and the phaeton.

Punch the pony and the phaeton carriage as written on the back of the postcard by Elizabeth's Grandmother, *Alma Leitch Rowan*.