

NHS President's Notes:

Dear Friends,

This crazy summer is almost over! On September 23, Saturday, 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM the Niles Historical Society will have a Yard Sale fundraiser. If you have items to donate for this sale, please deliver to the Westenfield Room on September 7, 10:00 AM – 2 :00 PM or September 8, 3:00 – 6:00 PM.

Along with the Yard Sale, new donations of sports memorabilia will be on display in the Westenfield Room. Tours of the Ward – Thomas Museum will take place from 12:00 – 2:30 PM. Additional activities are in the planning including old time games for the children. Vendors will be onsite also. *Ralph Tolbert* will present “A Tour of Downtown Niles in the Fifties and Sixties” in the Westenfield Room at 11 AM and 1 PM. Questions and comments will be encouraged.

Current projects include cleaning up the Victorian Garden beside the greenhouse. In the spring replanting will take place. If you would like to participate in the planning of the gardens please share your expertise with us. We are seeking Master Gardeners and all Green Thumbs. Call Anna Marie at 330-719-5716 or Sandy at 330-652-8329 for more information.

The Society is currently seeking bids for maintenance needed on the chimneys on the Ward – Thomas House and greenhouse. *David Martin* has been busy cleaning out the greenhouse and maintaining plants stored there.

Lynda Ralston attended a planning meeting for America 250 – Ohio, a celebration of the nation's 250th anniversary in 2026. Congress formed the US Semiquincentennial Commission/Foundation in recent years. The national America 250 Commission has encouraged all US states and territories to form commissions and to make this the largest and most inclusive celebration in our nation's history. The historical societies in Trumbull County are beginning planning for this event now, focusing on local history. If this interests you, please call us at the above numbers.

The City of Niles which owns the Ward – Thomas Property has hired a grant writer for the City. *Lynda* and *Anna Marie* met with *Bianca Rozenblad*, planner and grant coordinator. As a beginning Bianca will be seeking grants from the Ohio History Connection focusing on projects to make the Ward – Thomas buildings and property ADA compliant.

The assessment of all buildings on the property was completed by *psaArchitecture, Inc.* This information will be utilized as a guide for future improvements and restoration of the buildings.

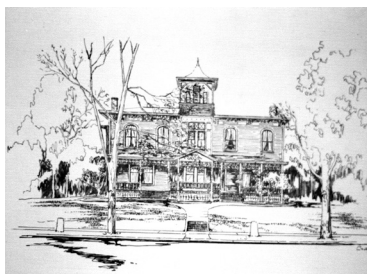
As always you as a member of the Niles Historical Society are encouraged to participate. Would you like to tell your family's history or share a memory in the newsletter? Would you share your gardening expertise with us? Are you experienced in construction and repair of buildings? Your guidance is needed!

A special thank you to *Sarah White Infante* and to *Ethel* and *Al Latil* for sharing their story and photographs in this issue.

Visit our website: <https://www.nileshistoricalsociety.org/>
Niles Stories: <https://www.nileshistoricalsociety.org/stories.htm>
Niles Photos: <https://www.nileshistoricalsociety.org/photos.htm>
Niles History Books: <https://www.nileshistoricalsociety.org/bokpg.htm>

Reminiscences about my father, Andrew J. Leitch

By Harriet E. Leitch, September 6, 1963, Part 2.



(L): A line drawing of the Dr. A. J. Leitch residence located at 234 West Park Avenue in Niles. Built before 1895, it was later the home of *Harry* and *Ethel Mason Evans*. (R): The Leitch home as it appears today.

I was always fond of reading. There was no public library in Niles, only a poor school library with sets of the *Elsie* and *Alger* books. Father went to Cleveland every month to a medical meeting and always asked me which book I wanted him to bring me. I always had a list in case he could not get the one book and he usually brought back a couple from Burrows Book Store. He planned to be with us on Sunday evenings and read to us. Two books I remember were *Water Babies* and *Chatterbox*.

Meals were rather irregular as to time. Often we stood at the front gate and watched down the street ready to rush in and give the signal that he was in sight or run down and hippity-hop up the street with him. He was very particular about our appearance. We had to come to the breakfast table fully clothed with our hair combed or be sent away from the table. We were allowed to go in our bare feet in the back yard only. No bicycle riding on Sunday but as a treat a surrey was rented at the local livery stable and a horse to join his own horse and we drove out to grandmother's to spend the afternoon.

Perhaps we thought he was severe as we saw so little of him compared to mother and he seemed to be the final voice of authority. He went with me to *Smith* when I was entering and stayed until I had the results of three entrance examinations, and encouraged me all the time.

While I was in college he wrote to me every week. When I was called home from college on account of his first illness, May 30, 1903, he was in a coma for ten days, I decided that I would not return to college in the fall as I knew he would never be well. He told me he wanted me to go back that I would never be satisfied just to stay at home as the Niles girls did.

When I was blue and wrote frankly of my discouragement after getting back to college, he made the effort to take the trip to Northampton to see for himself how I was. The summer after this illness when he was recuperating, we went to Cambridge Springs, Pennsylvania. In the mornings we walked the mile to the Springs and drank water. He said that if a person walked that much at home it would do him just as much good. He never believed in dancing probably on account of the lack of musical ear but he permitted me to take private lessons in the ball room while he sat at a window and looked in.

He was a member and regular attendant of the Presbyterian Church. Once he said, “For anything I have given to the church, I have received back many fold.” He was present at Communion Service the Sunday before his final stroke.

Andrew J. LeitchDied May 7, 1904

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*.
t—*Elizabeth Rowan*

Please share your family stories and photographs with the Niles Historical Society to preserve the Niles history for future generations.
Contact: *Anna Marie Beagle, Sandy Bilovsky or Ralph Tolbert* Page 1



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



1910 ca postcard of the house at 219 North Bentley and the house as it appears today. Note the front steps have been relocated and the widow's walk railings have been removed on the second floor. Original photo: Ethel Latil.



View of updated steps, new side cement wall and side view of house.

The house, located at 219 North Bentley Avenue was built in 1905 by *Arthur and Agnes Cecilie Piper*, their children were: *Frank Bernard*-18, *Arthur Cecil*-16, *Mary*-15, *Harry*-10, and *Billie*-3

(as reported in 1910 Census). *Winifred C. Piper* was an adopted daughter.

Their daughter, *Mary E.* lived in the house next and married a Warren pharmacist, *Fred C. Lewis*. They had two daughters; *Virginia* and *Natalie*. *Natalie* had a son, *Robert* (Bob), who lived in the house in the 1950s and early 1960s. *Fred's* father, *Edward Lewis* also lived there.

Mary Lewis sold the home in late 1965 to *Harold and Helen Jobes* who sold the house to *Marcia M. Peterson* in May of the following year. In November 1969 *Julius Albert* and *Ethel Louise Latil* purchased the residence and are the present-day owners.

The house is situated on a double-lot and originally had eight rooms. The attic had a cistern to collect rainwater for bathroom uses and watering the gardens. The Latils opened up the third floor and built an additional two bedrooms to accomodate their eleven children.

1954 photograph of cub scouts taken on landing in house at 219 North Bentley Avenue. L-R:

First row: *David "Bucky" McClain, Ralph Tolbert, Steve Boesel, Tommy James.*
Second row: *Jimmy Kiracofe, John Knight, Bob Holy, and Danny Pruitt.*



All the cub scouts are wearing their Camp Chickagami badge. Everyone bought their uniforms, both cub and boy scout, at Hoffman's Department Store in downtown Niles.

Hoffman Fire: <https://www.nileshistoricalsociety.org/hofmnfire.htm>

Calendar of Events:

Business Meeting: Westenfield Room, September 9, 2023, 10:00 AM
Open House: Sunday, September 10, 2023, 2:00 - 5:00 PM. Last tour at 4:00 PM

Yard Sale and events: September 23, 2023, 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM

Yard Sale donations taken: September 7, 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM and September 8, 3:00 – 6:00 PM

M^cKinley 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 M^cKinley Heights. Two other truck terminals adjacent are Tauro's Dump Truck Service, which 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 M^cKinley Heights, the neighborhood bar is the Robbins Avenue Lounge.

North of Tibbets-Wick road was another family farm first settled by *Phileari Bianco* about 1875. The Bianco family did extensive farming. Two of Phileari's children, *Frank* and *Carl*, stayed on the farm. Frank stayed on in the family homestead and fathered 14 children while Carl moved closer to the corners and fathered 18 children. Both brothers were farmers and hucksters. Both homesteads are still standing in the area known as "Biancoland".

A small part next to Carl's home was sold to MMBA to erect its building to house fire equipment. There are streets plotted out in the section named for some of the Bianco children. Many children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren are living descendants of the same original settler, attesting to the sturdiness of the Bianco clan.

After 1900 there were eight homes built on the farm, and most of the families who originally bought these eight homes are still living there. It is a peaceful section of a prolific business district.

An early business man and humanitarian who has not been forgotten although he passed away nine years ago, was *Andy Ochman*. He first fitted out a small trailer as a travelling grocery store, selling groceries house to house in M^cDonald. When the weather got too bad to climb the hill into M^cDonald, he rented a corner from *Mr. Tibbets* and opened a hamburger stand. After being successful for 2 years, he bought an additional trailer, joined the two trailers together, and using one side as a counter, opened the first curb service in the State of Ohio. After returning from serving his country in World War II, Mr. Ochman bought the corner and built a restaurant which he operated until his death. He donated the land on which the first building of Fairhaven School was built.

The most outstanding development of M^cKinley Heights is the Benefit Association, MMBA, which originated in 1950 from a group of concerned and dedicated men who were a social club meeting in homes and public gathering places. *Ted Baker*, who died many years ago, was the first president.

The safety of the community was the prime motivation, so the club asked for donations from the public and support of fund raising projects to buy a fire truck. After buying the truck, they needed a building to house it. Ground was bought from Carl Bianco, and in 1953, the ground was broken for a two-door fire station. The name M^cKinley Heights Volunteer Fire Department was added. As the club and community continued to grow, the department continued to expand until today it is one of the largest and best equipped Fire Departments in the State of Ohio per capita. It has ten pieces of the latest equipment, including two ambulances. The station is manned twenty-four hours a day to give efficient and instant help when any emergency arises. A flag that has flown over the Capitol Building in Washington D.C. can be seen waving gloriously twenty-four hours a day.

The Ladies Auxiliary was chartered in 1952 to lend assistance to the men. Many club projects, Home Comings, and Social Games help to maintain and expand the club. It also has a very attractive social hall for gatherings and to rent out to the public for weddings, showers, graduations, etc.

In 1960, the MMBA bought 15 acres of woods behind the present Fairway Discount Store, and developed it as a family park for the community. The men built two enclosed pavilions, picnic tables, and playground equipment.

A new innovation lately has been the recruitment of young men in the neighborhood for an organization of Junior Firemen. This group is helpful in maintenance of the buildings and trucks, and to lend a hand whenever needed. These young men, though not allowed to take over the duties of the trained firemen, are being oriented to the know-how so they can perpetuate the services in the future.

The firemen are currently taking advanced training in fire equipment usage. In addition, they are taking an extensive course for Emergency Medical Technicians Training with *Norma Mrus*, R.N. as Director. They receive additional training from visiting doctors. This training is provided by the State Board of Education under the title of Trade, Industrial, and Vocational Services.



Photograph of the former stagecoach house on Route 422.

For additional information about the Niles Stagecoach House on Route 422 in M^cKinley Heights follow this link:
<https://www.nileshistoricalsociety.org/StageCoachHouse.htm>

To read more about the Andy Ochman story, follow this link:
<https://www.nileshistoricalsociety.org/HandyAndy.htm>

My Grandmother's House at 124 Robbins Avenue.

— Sarah White Infante May 2023.

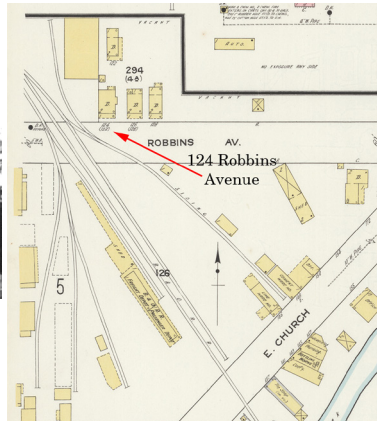
These are pictures of my grandmother's houses at 124 Robbins Avenue. There is a front view as well as a side view of the big house where my mother's family lived. My grandfather was a contractor and he built these houses. The houses were sold when they wanted to build the overpass for the B&O railroad tracks.



Katherine Reiss residence at 124 Robbins Avenue.



The above picture is the little house behind the big house which I believe my grandmother rented out. There was also a third house to the right of the big house which I also believed she rented out. The 1915 Sandborn fire map shows the location of Sarah White Infante's grandmother's house at 124 Robbins Avenue.



the houses were between the two sets of tracks on the north side of Robbins Avenue. They were pretty much where State Street dead-ends into Robbins Avenue today. There were also three additional houses between my grandmother's house and North Main Street.

My grandfather was hit and killed right by the main house when my mother was five years old. My grandmother raised and supported seven children as a dressmaker after my grandfather's death. My mother was born in the main house in 1912, so it would seem that the house was built prior to 1912.

I have a very vague memory of the big house, mainly the kitchen, as I was very young when there. I have a picture of me roller skating in front of the house when I was maybe four years old in 1952. Katherine Reiss is my grandmother and Eugene Dugan was my uncle married to my aunt, Margaret Dugan. My mother's name was also Katherine Reiss.

My uncle was co-owner with Frank DeJute of the Chrysler-Plymouth dealership on Main Street directly across the street from Stiver Chevrolet.



The DeJute Building at 236 North Main Street was built in 1928. A Desoto-Plymouth dealership was then located here. Later, C.H. Stiver sold Chevrolets at this location, then moved across the street.



Aerial view of the B&O railroad yards showing the path of East Church Street before the overpasses were built in 1953. Also note that East State Street did not continue through to Robbins Avenue at this time.



The Erie Railroad bridge passes over the street connecting Robbins Avenue and Church Street. The Herb Stein Lincoln-Mercury dealership is at the right-hand of image. To learn more about the overpass project: <https://www.nileshistoricalsociety.org/gradecrossingproject.htm> Page 2