

President’s Message:

The Society continues to offer tours of the Ward–Thomas House and has several private tours scheduled in the coming months.

Due to the lack of temperature–controlled storage space to preserve the White House Ladies gowns, the Society is renting a unit at MACK self–storage on Robbins Avenue. It is next to the Joseph Rossi Funeral Home.

The financial report required by the American Rescue Plan for funds we have received has been filed with the Trumbull County Board of Commissioners. The \$63,050 was used to replace the barn roof and maintenance required for the greenhouse.

There are no plans for outside activities on the grounds of the Ward–Thomas House this summer due to repairs on the grounds of the house and ADA improvements.

The restoration of the four chimneys on the house will begin on September 2, 2024. The ADA improvements to the grounds and greenhouse have not been scheduled. The City is waiting for the approval of the Ohio History Commission which granted the funds for these improvements. The repairs and matching funds are sponsored by the City of Niles. The expectation is that the work will be completed by the end of September.

Serendipity –In May, the Society was contacted to help identify which Stein was in a 1911 Niles football photo (The Stein football story is on our website). Our Niles school yearbooks only went back to 1913, so no further photograph information was available.

In the first week of July, the Society received two photographs of the 1911 Niles football players. One photo was severely damaged but listed all the players’ names and it was the same team photo as the first.

A little Photoshop editing and now everyone has a clearer photograph AND all the names of the 1911 football team. This shows how important it is to share your historic photos with The Niles Historical Society to preserve the history of Niles.



Location of Mosquito Creek Beach, bounded by East Federal and West Streets. Houses are located from 140 West Street to 208 West Street.

Mosquito Creek Beach

Niles Daily Times July 2, 1928

Harry Yencer, West Street, has fixed up a pool in Mosquito Creek at the Federal Street Bridge that proved a popular resort for the youngsters of the neighborhood yesterday. Mr. Yencer cleaned up the creek bottom and the bank and repaired his dock so that the spot offers a nice place for a plunge.

Niles Daily Times June 20, 1929

Bathing Pool May Become a Reality Soon Ideal Spot on Mosquito Creek Located by Mayor and Party Expect Owners to donate land Project may be complete in a week or 10 days

A swimming pool with real sand beach is no longer a dream, but will become a reality through the efforts of interested citizens and *Mayor George Marshall*. Within in a week or ten days, the project will be finished, it is predicted.

For many months, Harry Yencer has allowed children and adults to swim in Mosquito Creek, using his property as a beach. His private dock has been used by bathers for several years.

Mr. Yencer interested other residents along West Street in donating a portion of their property, bordering on the creek, to be used as a beach. One family erected a tent, at their own expense, for a dressing room for children who used the creek at the foot of their property.

Mayor Marshall, with a Times reporter, yesterday made an inspection and found the creek, at a point just above the Federal Street bridge, ideal for swimming purposes. While the water is somewhat discolored, there is no acid in it and children can swim there without ill effects.

It is the purpose of the mayor, however, to have a chemist’s report on a sample of the water so that parents will have no fear in allowing their children to use the creek for swimming.

The property of Harry Yencer will be graded and filled and a sand beach will be made for the bathers. Today the mayor will meet with other property owners regarding donation of a strip of property for about 100 yards along the creek, for bathing purposes.

In this manner, a bathing place will be available for the children and adults at a time when the city is financially unable to provide one. The mayor expects that final arrangements can be made today and that the filling and grading can be started within a week.

In the meantime, hundreds of boys and girls and quite a few adults, are making use of the Yencer property daily for a bathing beach.

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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
Scan the QR Code to visit our website.
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

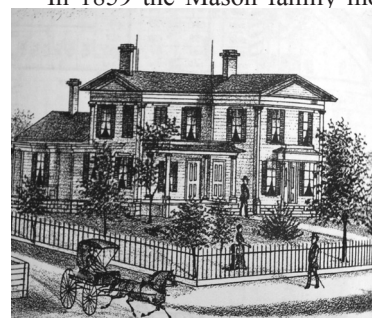
Trustees:

Anne Townley, Nancy Malone, and Sandy Bilovesky

H.H. Mason Addition Story

The Mason Family has long occupied a prominent place in Niles affairs. *H.H. Mason* came to Niles with his father, *Ambrose*, about 1835. He attended the district school and helped on the farm for a while and then accepted a clerkship in Warren and went there to live. In a few years he returned to Niles and entered the store which his father had established in partnership with *Josiah Robbins*. As did many of the early settlers, H.H. Mason invested in purchasing property in Niles.

In 1859 the Mason family moved into the homestead on Vienna Avenue. (Image is from an 1874 Everts Atlas of Trumbull County)



In 1866 he was elected the first mayor of the incorporated village of Niles. He also served on the village council and in the township offices for a number of years.

From 1873 to 1880 Mr. Mason was cashier of the Citizen's Savings and Loan Company. From 1880-1889 he served as postmaster. The next year he was made president of the first National Bank of Niles, a position he held for three years.

On the right is the view of the H.H. Mason residence at 207 Vienna Avenue as it appeared in the Fall of 2018 before it was demolished.

Read the full story of the Mason family:

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



H.H. Mason residence at 207 Vienna Avenue.

Calendar of Events

August 10, 2024

Business Meeting

10 AM in Westenfield Room

All interested parties are welcome to attend

August 4, 2024

Open House

2:00 – 5:00 PM, last tour at 4:00 PM.



The Ben-Lin(**Bentley-Lincoln**) Club is located at 701 Bentley Avenue.

Ben-Lin Club Origins Niles Daily Times, March 18, 1935

Ben-Lin Club purchases lots as site for a new clubhouse and playground. The Recreation Club announces it has purchased several lots at the northeast corner of Bentley Avenue and Hughes Street. Trustees of the club presented the clear deeds for the lots at the regular meeting Sunday. The property has been paid for (free and clear). Purchase of the site for a clubhouse and playground is the first major step in the program of the Ben-Lin club as outlined when the organization was formed last October (1934).

The money for the lots has been raised since that time by card parties sponsored by the club and by the individual efforts of members.

The building and lot committee is expected to make a report on this matter within a short time. The committee includes *Raleigh Hughes*, Chairman; *Frank Baker*, *Bob MacClain*, *Roy Porter* and *Joe Griffiths*.

Niles Daily Times, November 6, 1935

Dedication of the new Ben-Lin Recreation Club House, located at the corner of North Bentley Avenue and Hughes Street, and the opening meeting of the season will take place tonight at 6:30. The event marks the results of the labor and effort of the group since the purchase of the club house site earlier in the year.

The club house is 22 x 68 feet. The basement under the entire building contains a kitchen, showers, storage and club room. The main floor will be used for social functions of the club. Plans are being made to install a hard and soft ball field, tennis, handball, basketball and horseshoe courts.

The club was organized for the purpose of promoting recreation facilities for the residents of that locality and has had remarkable progress having membership of 78 at this time.

Roy Porter is the president of the club, *Frank Baker* the vice-president, *Myron Kidd* recording secretary, *Roy Finley* financial secretary, *Reese Williams* treasurer, *Gwylm Davis* chaplain, and *William John*, *Joseph Griffith*, *Jay Bauman*, *Frank Baker*, and *Raleigh Hughes* are trustees.

Niles Daily Times, November 11, 1935

On Wednesday of this week, November 6, the Ben-Lin Recreation Club house will be thrown open to the public with a dedication and social evening. Following the program there will be dancing and music by *Eddie Fusco's* orchestra.

Niles Daily Times, May 11, 1937

Ed Williams of Cherry Street was painfully burned and the Ben-Lin Club House almost completely destroyed in an explosion and fire that occurred shortly before six o'clock last night (May 10, 1937).

Williams was in the building when the explosion occurred and suffered first degree burns on his face, and his hands were badly blistered and burned. He did not breathe any of the flames, however, and according to his physician, his condition is not serious although his injuries are very painful. He is confined to his home and it will be about three weeks before the burns are healed, the doctor stated.

While fire engines were held up for four minutes at the B&O railroad crossing on Church Street, the flames gained headway and spread so rapidly that only a charred shell of the building remains after the blaze had been extinguished. Due to the delay at the grade crossing, it took the firemen 10 minutes to arrive at the scene.

According to the statement of one of the members, the fire was originally confined to the kitchen and the damage would not have run over \$15 if the fire department could have arrived sooner. The building is partially covered by insurance.

The fire occurred shortly after six o'clock last night when Mr. Williams unlocked the basement door of the club. Its origin is unknown although it is believed to have broken out when Mr. Williams struck a match to light a cigarette or pipe and ignited escaping fumes from the gasoline pipes with which the kitchen of the building was equipped.

The explosion knocked him out of the door and nearby residents observed him crawling from the building as though he had been blinded. The alarm was turned in immediately while *Raleigh Hughes*, *John Kidd* and *Myron Kidd*, members of the club, and the first persons on the scene, endeavored to fight the blaze. The fire was extinguished a few minutes after fire department arrived.

All the windows were broken in the building, part of the basement wall was blown out, and the frame building was gutted by the flames. Later investigation of the gasoline pipes revealed that all of the valves were closed and there seems to be no way for the fumes to escape according to the reports.

Niles Daily Times, August 25, 1937

From the ashes of the old Ben-Lin Club is now arising a new and more beautiful edifice. At a meeting of the Ben-Lin Club held last evening, the final contracts for the reconstruction of the club's quarters, recently destroyed by fire, were let.

Every evening the club has been the scene of intense activity on the part of members who have been able to lend physical aid to the task of reconstruction. The exterior of the building has already been put up.

The building specifications include the most modern developments in building construction, particularly as to electrification and heating. One of the innovations will be air conditioning, which will assure a comfortable setting for the many coming affairs planned by the club.

An elaborate opening will be held within the next four or five weeks, open to the public, which will climax the hopes of those who have aided unrelentingly since the organization met its misfortune.

The rebuilding of the new quarters is a tribute to the perseverance and loyalty of the leaders and membership of the Ben-Lin Club. Many of these men could be seen every evening at the corner of Bentley Avenue and Hughes Street working hard and contributing without compensation their labor so, that the Ben-Lin Club may again assume its place as a community center.

Niles Daily Times, November 3, 1937

With a gala list of activities, the Ben-Lin Club will celebrate its grand re-opening Friday night. President *Oscar Teucke* announced today that the curtain will be rung up on the ceremonies at the club room at 7:30 o'clock.

A festive evening of music and dancing has been arranged. *Professor Turner*, Warren City Schools superintendent, will make the principal address of the evening and President *Oscar Teucke* and past-president *Roy Porter* will recount the history of the Ben-Lin Club.

Residents of Niles need no introduction to the Ben-Lin Club. For the past several years, its club rooms have been the scene of much general community activity. It has witnessed the whole gamut of town enterprise from the twinkling feet of children at their dancing lessons to the cheers of a football banquet.

The club has been widely publicized over the entire Mahoning Valley as one built almost entirely by the personal physical efforts of its members, assembling each evening, often after a day's hard work at the store or mill, the members each contributed of their time and services.

Personal memory: myself and many of my friends attended the Wednesday night dances held at the Ben-Lin Club in 1958-59.

For many years Niles has realized the need of a swimming pool. But there the matter ended. A survey was made and two spots along Mosquito Creek were tentatively picked as likely spots to dredge a pool. It was the plan of Mayor George O. Marshall to have a hole dredged along the banks of the creek, either near the dam or below Central Park. Water was to be furnished by the City and the overflow to enter Mosquito Creek.

Then came the hitch (There always is one, you know). The State Board of Health refused to allow such a project unless certain specifications were observed regarding purifying the water weekly. Equipment for this purpose would have run into thousands of dollars, so naturally this project had to be abandoned, for the financial condition of the city at this time would not permit such an expenditure.

But, where there's a will there's a way! Harry Yencer, West Street, came along and said that he would be willing to donate the lower portion of his property along the creek for a beach if the city would see that the water was not polluted by the mills.

Investigation was made and it was found that the stream is not polluted, but that the water is merely discolored. There is no acid or impurities in the water according to city officials who have made tests.

Then Mr. Yencer stated that he believed that other property owners along the creek would donate portions of their property for a bathing beach.

Two days ago an inspection tour with Mayor Marshall found that, with a little grading and filling, a beach could be had with little expense.

Attorney Sam Mango donated his services, and went with Mayor Marshall to interview the property owners. As a result, the properties of Caruso, Mutch, Annunzito, Watkins, Yencer and Siegfried families, have been donated to the public for a beach.



Attorney Sam Mango

The service Department trucks and laborers have been donated by Bert O'Connell, service Director, and work will be started early next week.

Bert Holloway, superintendent of the Water & Light Department, will furnish sand for the beach.

But there still was another problem. What about supervisors and guards? The city could not pay to employ men without red tape and legislation. People wanted the pool and beach now.

So Mr. Yencer arranged with the Boy Scouts to work with him in supervising and guarding the beach. All this service was donated to the public.

Ropes will be placed to cut off the upper portion of the creek where the water is deeper than it is in neighborhood of the proposed beach. All danger will be eliminated and every precaution will be taken to make it safe for even the youngest children. Tests will be made of the water frequently to make sure the water supply is free from all injurious imbalances.

Never has there been better actions on the part of city officials, and citizens, working in co-operation, than in this endeavor. Too much praise cannot be given to Mayor Marshall, Samuel Mango, Harry Yencer, service and water departments heads and the families who have donated their properties.

This is an example of what could be done in this city if the city officials and people would work together harmoniously. Niles was backward in getting started on a beach and swimming pool, but now it is possible to have a beach 500 feet long. Few cities can boast of that.

Although yesterday afternoon was far from warm, many local people wended their way to the Mosquito Creek bathing beach. Much to the surprise of visitors, the beach was filled with laughing, playing bathers, but few of them were kids. Few in comparison, it might be said, for the beach was crowded with kids from 17 to 70.

Some were tossing beach balls while quite a few were just sitting in the sand with their eyes closed, trying to make themselves think they were at Atlantic City. Others were swimming up and down the creek.

The sand has greatly improved the location as a popular swimming place for all the people of Niles. Further up the stream, the bank will be graded and filled and topped with sand. Soon the swimming beach will be in condition to accommodate at least two thousand local people daily, according to those who have made this beach possible.

Niles Official City Directory 1933-1934, Published December 10, 1933

140 West Street	Harry Yencer
146 West Street	Angelo Caruso
152 West Street	Mary Mutch (Samuel Petrolia)
208 West Street	Joseph Gioiello (L Annunzito)
220 West Street	John Vargo (Watkins)
222 West Street	Mrs. Pearl Watkins



One of the properties, now a duplex at 152 West Street, that shared their land which bordered Mosquito Creek as part of the Niles City Beach.

Houses along West Street were built in the H.H. Mason addition: 146 West Street, built 1900; 152 West Street, built 1910; 140 West Street, built 1913. 220 West Street became the property of the City of Niles as a land bank in 2010. Most of these houses remain as single-family dwelling with the house at 152 West Street having been converted into a duplex.

In July 1929 Jacob D. Waddell, vice president of Empire Steel Corporation, presented the city with 52 acres of land to be used as a municipal park. It was located just outside the city limits between Park and Warren Ave. and on both sides of Lover's Lane. It was hoped that a swimming pool might someday be added to the park.

With the Great Depression of the 1930's in full effect, the federal government announced a public works program offering to pay 30% of the cost of projects that would give work to the needy. The idea of a swimming pool and bath house in Waddell Park began to take shape.

The first concrete was poured in February 1934 and work began as soon as construction material arrived. The pool was dedicated Wednesday July 25, 1934. The newspaper stated, "to several thousand swimming enthusiasts of the city, today marks a noted change from an unsanitary dirtied water creek swimming hole to the most modern and up-to-date pool." Thus ended the story of the Mosquito Creek Beach.