

President's Notes:

Dear Readers:

There is much to report in this issue of "The Niles Register".

First, the Society thanks all of you who have renewed your membership to the Society and welcome all new members. And a shout out to all of you who are thinking about it!

The response to the First Ladies Gown Preservation project is wonderful. We have heard from several donors who shared their story of a family member who participated in the creation of the gowns or modeled them. The goal is to repair, clean, and properly present the gowns so that they will last another fifty years.

The Society is thankful to *Bianca Rozenbald*, the grant coordinator for the City of Niles. Bianca applied for a grant from the Ohio History Fund, the Ohio History Connection's competitive matching grant program for history. The project is: Ward-Thomas ADA Improvements and Estate Upgrades. The award funded is \$18,981.00. The match is \$11,320.00. The scope of work to be done is: multiple repairs to the Carriage House (Westenfield Room) including adding an ADA Entry Door Operator; update the Greenhouse bathroom; ADA upgrades to the Main House and parking lot; creating a Concrete and Flagstone Walk from the over flow lot to the main drive way and repairs to the Greenhouse north sidewalk. The estimated cost of the project is \$30,300.00. Work will begin in May.

On Friday, April 12, 2024 between 11:00 AM and 12:00 PM Ohio History Connection Executive Director *Megan Woods* and Ohio History Fund and Outreach Manager *Andy Veroff* will be on site at the Ward-Thomas House to present a Big Check for this project. All are welcome to attend. A reception will take place in the Westenfield Room.

Grants from the History Fund are made possible largely by contributions of Ohio income tax refunds, line 26d, Form IT-1040, sales of Ohio History "Mastodon" license plates and designated donations to the Ohio History Connection. Consider donating a portion of your Ohio income tax refund to the History Fund. This fund provided \$187,600.00 for fourteen awards this year. Your contribution "pays it forward" for grants next year.

The Ohio Local History Alliance North East Region meeting was attended Saturday, March 16. The meeting was hosted by the Mahoning Valley Historical Society at the Industry and Labor Center in Youngstown. These meetings are a great learning and networking opportunity with other historical societies.

At the business meeting on March 9, the board ear-marked \$10,000 to be used to improve the landscaping, Victorian Garden and overall grounds clean-up. The Society will be requesting bids for this work.

The City of Niles was given permission by the insurance company to clean up the debris from the devastation of the Harry Stevens House. As a future activity the Society will investigate placing a Historical Marker at that site. Currently the cost of the markers start at \$3800.00

Have a wonderful Spring, *Anna Marie Beagle*, President

Waddell Park Plans-1930.



Waddell Park was donated to the City of Niles by *J.D. Waddell* August 7, 1928, their first gift included a 72-acre tract. Two months later, Mr. Waddell supplemented his first land gift with an additional 23 acres to the west of the original acreage extending the park from the city limits to the Erie railroad tracks on the west and including all of the land between Warren and Park Avenues.

This land, owned by the Niles Chamber of Commerce, is ideal for park purposes, being heavily wooded and located within walking distance from the center of town.

This land was accepted by the city council and turned over to the park commission for improvement. Work on clearing away the underbrush started immediately and the section facing Warren Avenue was scraped and leveled in preliminary work for a ball diamond.

Extensive work on the park started April 1 of this year (1930) when a topological survey was made and from the plan of landscaping the park developed. The baseball diamond was completed and the first game played there June 1. Mrs. Waddell threw the first ball on the new diamond and appropriate ceremonies preceded the game.

The cleaning work at the park was practically completed this summer and sewer and water connections are now under construction. This work has held up further improvements in the park but will be completed within 10 days after which rapid progress is expected.

A complete landscape map of the park was prepared showing the park as it will look when the entire program of improvements is completed.

The main entrance to the park will be on West Park Avenue just east of the railroad bridge. The main picnic grounds will be between Warren and Park Avenues east of the railroad tracks and Lover's Lane. The baseball diamond and athletic field entrance is near Warren Avenue and the entrance is from that street.

A smaller picnic ground west of Lover's Lane near Warren Avenue has been in use several times this summer. The triangular section of the park on West Park Avenue west of Lover's Lane and bounded by the railroad tracks has been reserved for a swimming pool which will be built in the future.

The land west of Lover's Lane will be used for tennis courts, shuffle board field and a general playground.

The two large natural groves of the park will be supplemented by the planting of 200 additional trees.

When completed, Waddell Park will provide Niles with a recreation center which will make this city second to none. The civic leaders of Niles are united in expressing gratitude to Mr. Waddell for his gift which will remain as an everlasting memorial to his philanthropy."

Niles Daily Times, September 4, 1930

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



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 access our website.
Visit our Website: <https://www.nileshistoricalsociety.org/>
Check out the historical 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

Facebook memories of Doubet Jewelry Store:

Rachel Nader

"I was 12 when my parents celebrated their 25th anniversary and I wanted to get them something very special. Mr. Doubet let me make payments over 8 months (nickles and dimes) until I had enough to purchase a silver plate. When I came in to make a deposit, he put my money in a little gold envelope with my name on it. He greeted me as if I was his richest, most important customer, but I'm pretty sure I was his poorest. I always remembered his great kindness and considered him as magical as the stardust that sparkled in the cement of the store's entryway.

James Sheldon

"Very kind man. My dad sent me to have the diamond replaced in my mom's engagement ring. He explained everything in detail even though I was 14 years old. Even showed me the diamond under a microscope to look for flaws."

Carol Ann Kauffman

"Mr. Doublet was a wonderful man. And a terrific jeweler. He designed my wedding band."

Louie George

"Got my engagement ring and wedding ring for my wife. My brother Bill worked there in 1950's. Still have my wife and the rings 65 years."

Trip Down Memory Lane Time:

Doubet's, Mervyn's and Hart's jewelry stores.

Can anyone remember any other jewelry stores in downtown Niles?

Calendar of Events:

April 6, 2024

Business meeting

10 AM in the Westenfield Room

All interested are welcome to attend.

April 7, 2024

Open house

2:00 – 5:00 PM, last tour at 4:00 PM.

April 12, 2024

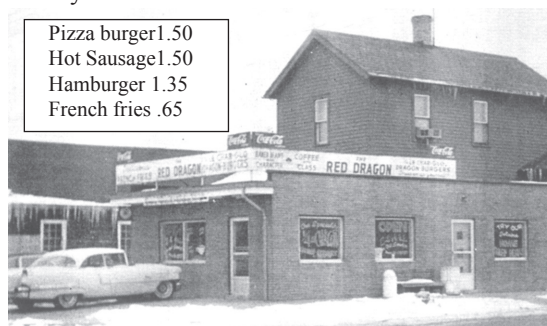
Presentation of the Ohio History Fund award

11:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Reception to follow in the Westenfield Room.

Home of the Red Dragon Burger, located on the street that runs behind M^cKinley High School, formally know as Liberty Street, was renamed George Rowlands Street in honor of a very devoted handicapped football fan. *Leontino Pietrangeli* bought it and renamed it Tony's Pizza in the late 1950s.

Pizza burger 1.50
Hot Sausage 1.50
Hamburger 1.35
French fries .65



So many Niles M^cKinley students ate lunch here in the '60s and '70s.

There was also a dance floor upstairs and students could smoke off school property.

Doubet Jewelry Store History.

The name Doubet has been synonymous with fine jewelry in Niles since the early 1920s. Doubet's Jewelry Store, 12 South Main Street, Niles, Ohio, started in 1915 by *Leon Doubet*. In 1923, Leon Doubet, for many years connected with the John Brenner Company of Youngstown opened a jewelry store in the Bowden building at 16 East State Street.



The Hartzell Building, home of the First National Bank and later in the 1970s the Girl Scout Council office, at the corner of South Main and East State streets, also was the location of Doubet's Jewelry Store.

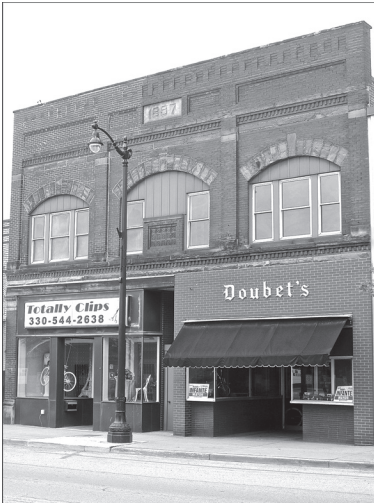


Leon Doubet Jewelry store located in the Hartzell Building at 19 South Main Street in 1927.

Doubet jewelry store in the Holeyton Building near the bank building. The Holeyton Building is the oldest remaining brick building and was built in 1887.

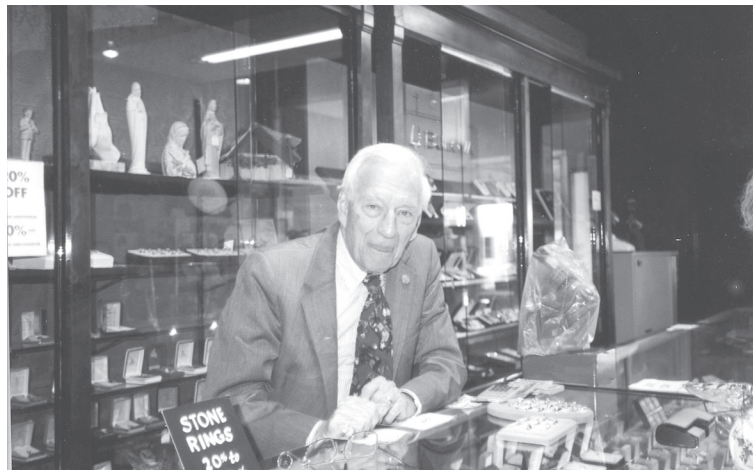
From the 1920s through the early 1950s, Kreiger's Pool Hall occupied the right side of the Holeyton Block. Later, Leon Doubet would move his jewelry store into this building.

A photo of Telego's Computer Repair and the Doubet Jewelry store, just before it went out of business. The building belongs to Mr. Doubet, but formerly was the Holeyton Funeral Home. The horses to pull the hearse were stabled across the street where Farmer's National Bank parking lot is located.



Signs were hung from the awnings of the South Main Street store announcing the closing at the beginning of 2002.

The business has been at its Main Street location for about 50 years and has been operating in the city for about 86 years. *Edwin, 'Duke', Doubet's* father, Leon, opened in the city after moving the family from Youngstown.



The interior of Doubet's Jewelry Store just before it closed its doors after many years in downtown Niles. Leon's son, Edwin "Duke" Doubet, ran the store from 1951 to 2001.

In His Golden Years, Jeweler Will Retire.

He and his employees have been robbed twice at gunpoint. His store's safe has been cracked twice and has guided many city residents through some major life events.

Now Edwin Doubet is closing the doors on Doubet's Jewelers for good. "When you get to be my age—I'm 80—you can't go on forever," Doubet said. "I'm just going to quit."

Significant events: He's seen many customers through their most significant life events. "I sold some people their high school rings, their engagement rings and their 25th anniversary rings," Doubet said. "I've been here that long."

He says it's trust that kept customers coming back to the jewelry and gift store. "People would rather trust a little store rather than a big store at the mall," Doubet said. "If I say something, they can trust me."

The Main Street site is the fourth location for the store. The first was on State Street and the other two both were also on Main. "Those buildings all burned down," Doubet said. "In those days there used to be stores all over the place. It used to be like Salem is now."

Edwin "Duke" Doubet, 90, of Niles died May 4, 2012 at Hospice of the Valley Hospice House in Poland. He was born December 1, 1921 in Meadville, Pennsylvania the son of Leon and *Rachel Kremis Doubet*.

Duke was a 1940 graduate of Niles McKinley High School, a member of the cheerleading squad and a graduate of The Bowman Institute.

He owned and operated, with his wife, Doubet's Jewelry Store in downtown Niles, a member of St. Stephen Catholic Church in Niles, Niles Rotary and Chamber of Commerce. He enjoyed golfing, working outside, vacationing with his family, attending dog shows, and a United States Army Veteran of World War II having served in Guam and Saipan.

He will be deeply missed by two daughters, *Dianne Doubet Henson* of Gatlinburg, Tennessee and *Lisa Doubet Baker* of Niles

His wife *Jeanne Jones Doubet* whom he married April 17, 1943 died July 29, 2008.

He is preceded in death by his parents, a sister *Jane Doubet Burke* and her son *Ken Burke*.

Friday, November 23, 2001 By Denise Dick Vindicator Trumbull Staff Niles.

Do you remember ordering your Niles McKinley high school class ring? Remember the girls wrapping their boyfriend's ring with angora yarn or wearing it around their neck like a pendant?

Robins Theatre Rescue



In 1974, the Robins Theater closed for the final time. It seemed like it had been struggling for the previous few years—possibly due to the new Loews Theater at the recently built Eastwood Mall. Most of downtown Niles was being razed.

As a kid, the Robins Theater was always a special place to me. It was a classic old-time theater with a single large screen, an iconic marquee and a fresco carved into the ceiling. It even had a balcony, which was only occasionally open, though we always tried to sneak into it. It was dark, magical and smelled like popcorn. Also, it was the only

movie theater I had ever been to.

When I learned of its fate, to be gutted and built into office space, I felt the need to preserve some part of that experience. Also at this time, my own personal interest in the movie business was growing. Getting some chairs to put in my basement would be a great way to keep the place, and spirit, alive.

Discovering that the theater was owned by one of the Niles city officials (*Phil Rickard*), I contacted him, repeatedly, to request some chairs as the renovation proceeded. I'm sure I was starting to be a pest, when he finally relented and said for me to meet him in front of the theater.

Being only 15 at the time, I had to enlist the help of my older brother (*Tom*) to drive and pick them up. He, too, was less than thrilled about this venture. Upon arriving, the three of us entered the abandoned theater with only flashlights, finding our way through the dark lobby and up the steps into the pitch-black balcony. There, against the wall, sat three connected seats that had already been unscrewed from the floor.

"Will these do?" he asked. I said "Oh yeah!". I was very appreciative. My brother and I proceeded to lug them down the musty carpeted steps and out through the front door to the trunk of my dad's waiting Nova.

For good measure, I also took the hand lettered sign from the poster case that announced what movie was playing that week. Strike while the iron is hot.

I kept those chairs in my parents' basement "theater" for years. They remained there long after I went to college and eventually moved to New York City. Periodically, my father would ask me if he could finally throw those "old chairs" away. "No. I will be back for them."

In 1991, I moved to Los Angeles and worked for Walt Disney Studios designing movie posters. Among the possessions that I relocated across the country were those Robins Theater chairs.

To this day, they sit in my home in Los Angeles, pretty much exactly as they were the day we carried them out of the balcony 49 years ago.— *Mark Crawford*



View from the balcony of the ceiling rotunda and stage, one of the two projectors that were used to show the films on the single large screen. To remind people of the theatres' size, the theatre building extended from Main Street all the way back to the alley.

The Theater: <https://www.nileshistoricalsociety.org/movietheatres.htm>

"When Niles officials were given the keys to the building, *Mayor Mientkiewicz*, along with other Niles officials, surveyed the building, searching for any remnants of the actual theater. "I said 'Where is the theater?' and they said 'This was it,'" Mientkiewicz said. "We were looking around to try to get upstairs to the balcony and couldn't find it." Eventually, the city officials found the stairwell to the balcony. It was behind a closed door, sealed with metal rods and covered with a tarp. At the top of the stairwell sat a secondary lobby, complete with restrooms and a carpeted ramp which led up to a room filled with complete darkness and no remaining electricity. "When we were first walking through here, not knowing where the theater room was or how to get there or what to expect, when we walked up the ramp and shined the light into the actual theater room, it was like finding the lost city of Atlantis," Mientkiewicz said.

Climbing the ramp into the dark room, the mayor's flashlight illuminated the clearest picture of what the Niles Theater used to look like — at least half of it. Stretching from the end of the balcony level across to about the middle of where the stage and screen used to be, a floor was installed directly on top of the offices below. Whereas on the ground level, all remnants of the theater had been erased, on the balcony level, an outline of the theater was still distinguishable.

The stage / screen area, with fireplaces on each side, still stood out at the front of the room, though cut in half. Intricate designs could still be seen on parts of the walls though most were worn down or faded. Looking upward, the room was capped with a rotunda-style ceiling. In the middle of the ceiling was a gaping hole that has existed since "however old the Google Earth images show," Mientkiewicz said.

While the theater building will be completely removed during demolition, some of its history was able to be preserved. At the top of the theater, several wooden chairs and sections of the original carpet were still intact and able to be saved. In the projector room, several film canisters were left, though what movies they contained was undeterminable. The largest relics the city has been able to save are two gas-powered film projectors, both of which had exhaust pipes sticking out of holes in the building. *Audra Dull*, the public services manager at the McKinley Memorial Library, said one of the projectors, along with a few other artifacts, were acquired by the library and are on display at the McKinley Birth Home. "We are going to have on display a projector and some seats from that theater," Dull said. "They will be cleaned up, but they will still be all original." Dull said preserving local history is important. She said the library looks to partner with the Niles Historical Society and other entities to keep the legacy of the city intact."

Warren Tribune Chronicle, October 29, 2023