

The Niles Register



The Niles Historical Society
PO Box 368
Niles, Ohio 44446

certified by
OHIO ASSOCIATION
of HISTORICAL
SOCIETIES &
MUSEUMS

March -April 2025

President's Message—

Dear Readers: We are all looking forward to Spring. You should have received a membership request in the mail. Many of you have already replied and the Society thanks you. Your donation for membership supports the operating budget of the Niles Historical Society and permits the publication of this newsletter.

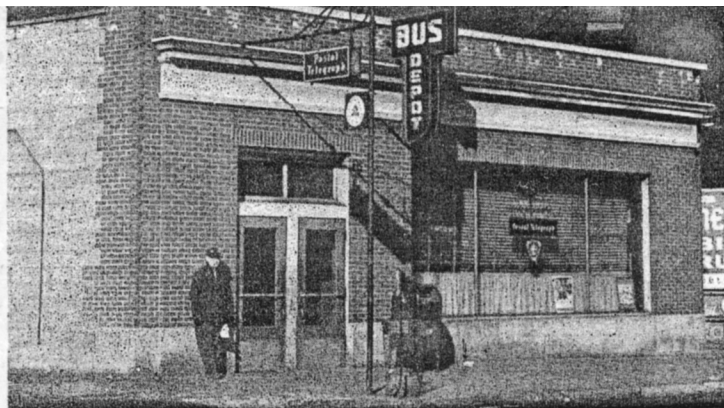
With Spring approaching the Society is planning upgrades to the grounds and gardens. The greenhouse is in need of brick work repair. We are waiting for the Ohio History Connection to approve the RFP and release the funds for the ADA improvements that the organization was granted.

At the open house on March 2, a visitor was a descendant of the Ward family. She was very interested in obtaining new information about her family heritage. Her trip was well rewarded.

On February 15, 2025 the Society held an event in the Westernfield Room titled "Timeless Love". Our thanks to *Meredith Elliot* who created a display of wedding gowns from different time periods and presented a program on various wedding traditions and how they developed over the years. Although there was a snowstorm that morning a few souls braved the weather and attended the event. Those in attendance had a fun time, sharing ideas and memories.



One of the wedding gowns displayed at the Event, "Timeless Love."



Niles Bus Depot (built in 1943) was located on East State Street near the Warner Theatre. Harry Humble opened a restaurant here in 1946.

Niles Bus Service. Niles Daily Times August 8, 1952

Recommendations that Niles City Council approve a petition by the Niles Transit Lines for limited bus service to prevent taking off of all service August 15, 1952 was made today by the Chamber of Commerce's Retail Merchants Division. It notes that the Chamber's Transportation Committee and Retail Division has carefully studied the request to discontinue service on West Park Avenue and North Main Street routes.

Under the plan, service would continue on the Robbins-Hartzell, Mason-Robbins and South Side runs with discontinuance of North and West Side runs as unprofitable. Belief is that Ohio Greyhound could provide through service on the North Side although whether it would agree to do so is an unknown factor.

Notice was presented to Council by the Transit Lines two weeks ago that discontinuation of all busses would be necessary, August 15, as a result of declining use in recent months.

Niles Daily Times November 28, 1952

Interest in re-establishing bus service in Niles has been expressed to City Council by two Niles residents and a Youngstown resident. Separate proposals for starting bus service was received from *John Kerest* of the Liberty Bell Line, Youngstown; *Frank Yuhasz*, Niles; and *Harry Berline*, Niles. Speaking before Council, Kerest has a definite proposal for scheduling bus service and wishes to begin immediately, while the other two have tentative plans for such service.

Council agreed that in view of the fact that Yuhasz and Berline are Niles residents, that it is only fair to allow them until December 6 for presenting definite plans. Council will then be able to consider the merits of each proposal and possible plans by any other parties interested in Niles bus service.

Niles has been without bus service since the Niles Transit Lines suspended operations November 8 after its management and Council failed to reach an agreement on route changes requested by the company. Transit management has stated that company was on the verge of bankruptcy and couldn't continue operations. The transit firm had operated in Niles since 1947.

Niles Daily Times March 17, 1955

There is still a faint hope of Niles receiving city bus service, something it has lacked since two years ago this month, according to reports by City Council. Niles lost bus service in the Spring of 1953 after having had such service steadily from 1940 to 1952 and off-and-on in 1952-53.

The Boardman Transit Lines had hoped to include the city school bus service contract in any service it might consider starting in Niles. However, a three-year contract was awarded by the Niles City School Board Monday night to a Niles firm, *Mrs. Hanna Rogers* of Niles, who has provided school bus service for the past several years.

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To read more about transportation in Niles, follow this link:
<https://www.nileshistoricalsociety.org/Stories2/NilesBus.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

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

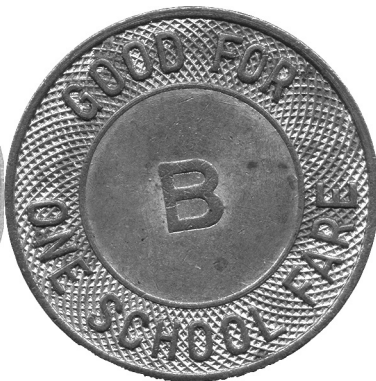
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The Niles firm was the only one to bid on the school project although it was reported in Council that the Boardman firm had planned to bid but failed to present its bid in time because of a misunderstanding.

Photograph of type of bus used by Niles Transit Lines.



1947 Bus tokens shown for regular bus fare and school fare. There were no board-owned school buses for student transportation. Most students were able to walk to their neighborhood schools.



Calendar of Events:

Business meeting:

Saturday, April 12, 2025, 10:00 AM

Saturday, May 3, 2025, 10:00 AM

Open House:

Sunday, April 6, 2025, 2:00 PM

last tour at 4:00 PM

Sunday, May 4, 2025, 2:00 PM

last tour at 4:00 PM

Business meetings are open to all members of the Niles Historical Society.



On January 29, 2025 *Ralph Tolbert* presented "They Shall Not Pass", the story of Niles residents and the KluKluxKlan confrontations in 1924. The program was well received by approximately 60 attendees. The event was sponsored by the Young at Heart group of St. Pope John XXIII Parish at the new Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Parish Hall. Page 4



Exterior view of the original building on Rout 422.

Trumbull New Theatre, Inc.

The First Twenty Years.

As written by: *Ted Kromer*

Transcribed by: *Brett Bunker*

Trumbull New Theatre, Inc. originated in January, 1948 as an off-spring of a YWCA study group supervised by *Mrs. Dorothy Gmucs*. Wishing to expand their activities, the members of that group asked *Mrs. Frances Pendleton* to help them start a theatre group.

Mrs. Pendleton agreed, somewhat reluctantly, having given up active participation in theatre work when she married and moved to Warren. She was doubtful of the chances for survival of such a group in Warren and so a strict set of standards was established, most of which are still in effect, including the principle of self-support. TNT is not, and has never been, subsidized, but has always been self-supporting.

The Pendleton's soon found their home swarming with the activities of the group. At each of the early meetings and rehearsals everyone contributed a dime to the kitty until enough had been accumulated to finance an evening of one-acts.

In May, with total savings of \$60, they felt they were ready and the one-acts were presented to an invited audience in the Pendleton's living room! Later, after two successful separate programs of one-acts, it was decided to try a full three-act production and the play chosen was *Noel Coward's "Hay Fever,"* a comedy about a wacky, theatrically oriented family!



One of the early TNT plays presented at the Pendleton residence.

The Pendleton home continued as the base of operations and the living room as the stage but "*Hay Fever*" proved so successful that the American Cancer Society contracted to sponsor a performance of it. Full sized sets were constructed and TNT trod the boards of a real stage for the first time – at Konold Auditorium in Harding High School.

One more play was presented in the Pendleton living room, "*Hotel Universe*." The next five were at Konold and it looked as though the high school would be the home of the group for quite a while. The stage hands union thought otherwise, however, and with a show already in rehearsal a search was begun for a non-union stage.

Shelter was found at the First Presbyterian Church, a small stage, to be sure, after the vastness of Konold, but we were still in business. Three productions were presented here but subtle restrictions made it mandatory that TNT look elsewhere again. An agreement was made with the school board and one school auditorium, that at the newly constructed Turner Junior High School, was kept exempt from union restrictions.

Seven productions followed at Turner, necessitating building and painting scenery elsewhere (Anywhere!), moving everything to the school about two nights before opening, dress rehearsing in the midst of bedlam, and then striking and moving out closing night.

Expenses were high, especially with overtime pay for school employees, when it finally occurred to us that the second floor loft we had been renting on Main Street for storage, a meeting place and a workshop had potential as a theatre – small, but our own.

The return to Turner saw eight more productions presented there, and also saw the desire for a home of our own growing greater. We had been budgeting with fury and in 1955 managed to purchase, with \$3,750 hard-earned proceeds from productions, three-quarters of an acre of land on Route 422 south-east of the city.



View of a typical TNT production which illustrates the intimacy the audience experiences due to the closeness to the stage.

It was one long cold winter devoted to getting the building ready to open. Girls who could barely pick up a brick soon found they move two cement blocks, one in each hand, just as easily as men. In fact, some of the girls even laid up the cement block walls. Choicest job of all was tending the bon fire in the middle of what is now the auditorium, the only source of heat during construction.

The opening show was to be "*The Seven Year Itch*." Optimistically, it had been cast in October for an early winter opening. It was rehearsed, and rehearsed, and rehearsed – and postponed, and postponed, and postponed. It's the only TNT show that ever rehearsed for six months.

It was finally decreed that, ready or not, March 15, 1957, was "*It!*" Things really started to hum. The play moved onto the stage and rehearsed through construction work thus giving the cast the most practical lessons in projection they could ever get. The set was, literally, constructed in less than a week between the hours of midnight and 5:00 or 6:00 a.m.

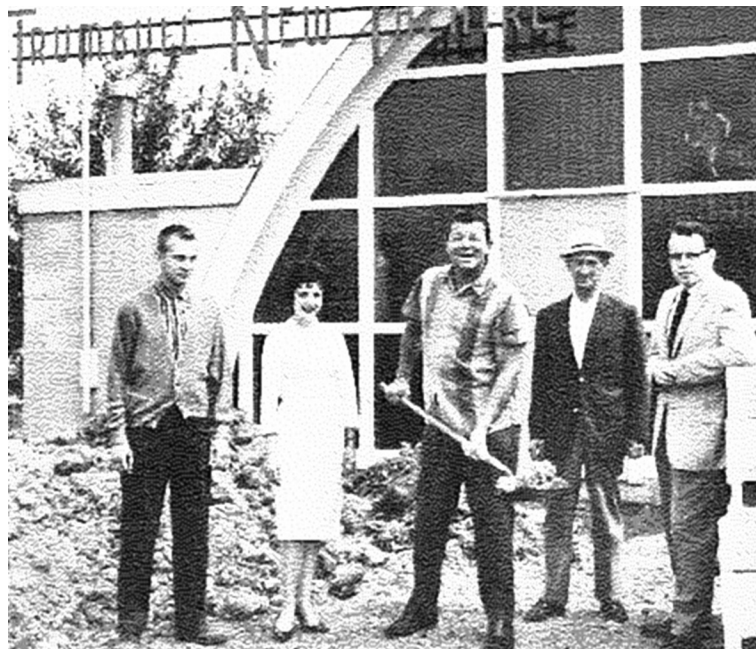
Opening week was a classic blend of utter confusion and extreme good luck with deadlines being met with hairline accuracy at every turn. For example – at 5:00 p.m. opening day every vehicle on the lot was backed up to the doors and all construction equipment not wanted in sight for the opening was loaded into them to be hauled away. People were still searching for their belongings a year later.

At 6:30 the plumber arrived and endowed us with water. At the same time the furnaces were connected, the florist arrived to decorate the lobby, and the members rushed home to get really dressed up for the first time in months. The women's long gloves covered the calloused hands of laborers and the men's tuxedos covered many a newly developed muscle. Continued Page 3...

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The building of that first stage of the theatre was definitely a once-in-a-lifetime experience for those involved and when, four years later with the mortgage paid off, it was decided to add the permanent lobby (of brick and glass with a vaulted ceiling), the entire operation was contracted.

The work also included remodeling the original lobby to include a checkroom and small kitchen. The lobby addition has provided invaluable space not only for the comfort and convenience of audiences but for meetings, rehearsals, exhibitions, receptions and an occasional party.



TNT breaks ground for new \$22,000 lobby addition. Movie star, *Jack Carson*, who appeared here last week in Kenley Theatre's "Take Me Along", turns the first shovel for Trumbull New Theatre's lobby addition project.

The job will be completed by October 1961. The first phase of the TNT Playhouse which cost \$25,000 was completed in 1957. It included the stage, auditorium, and foyer. The mortgage was burned on this first step in June 1960. Pictured are: *Richard Boyd, Marcia Russ, Carson, George Smith and TNT President, Stan Hollingsworth.*

In the fall of 1967, after more than a year of negotiations, a parcel of land two hundred feet square behind and slightly to the east of the theatre was purchased thus solving the problem of what to do for space when the expansion of the theatre could be realized. The property thus acquired could not be immediately utilized even for parking as a result of its being paid for with cold, hard cash! But it is ours!

One of the most unique aspects of TNT is that the majority of its directors and actors have received their training within the group. A would-be director starts, for instance, by assisting the director of a regular production and/or by trying his or her hand at one-act plays which are either presented to the membership at the regular monthly meetings or taken outside the theatre for public service or entertainment programs.

In January, 1967, we experimented with another full evening of one-acts, this time as part of a regular season, staffing it with four novice directors. Acceptance was enthusiastic and in the following season two of these novice directors were assigned full sized productions.

We also present Costume Parades featuring the more interesting and unique items we have accumulated in Wardrobe over the years, a collection which we now estimate at slightly over a thousand costumes. This includes authentic period clothing given us as well as things we have constructed for productions.

TNT belongs to OCTA, the Ohio Community Theatre Association, a state-wide organization of nearly one hundred community theatres.

OCTA members maintain contact through the year with OCTA Newsletter and by visiting each other's theatres. They meet each fall in annual Conference for seminars, workshops, lectures, compare notes and, in general, learn from and of each other.

We also belong to APT, the American Playwrights Theatre, an organization sponsored by the American National Theatre and Academy and the Ohio State University.

The APT purpose is to provide college and community theatres with scripts by major authors either before or during their professional productions. It was in this manner that we produced "The Days Between".

The term 'Off Broadway' isn't geographical. Broadway theatres have 500+ seats, Off-Broadway have 100-499, and Off-Off-Broadway theatres have less than 100 seats.

Mrs. Pendleton, "At T.N.T. we give you a chance to fail. That is so true. There you can experiment. You can fail and not be doomed forever."

Thomas Schroth, "The thing that I love about community theater and especially the thing that I love about community theater here is that it draws everybody in. We have people who are superb musicians and superb craftsmen in building trades, electrical engineers, absolutely every walk of life in the community. Somehow everybody has a chance to shine a little bit. We have a hoard of teenagers who have nothing else to do but run over to McDonald's and come over to the theater to work. The marvelous thing about it is the end product. It is something that everybody works on. Everybody can see a worth in it. I don't know of anything else in the arts that adds that to a community the way theater does."

It does with everyone. Everyone I know gets involved in theater. The thing that makes T.N.T. unique and which promotes the sort of thing that you are talking about is that we are totally unprofessional. Nobody is paid for anything." Tom Schroth, a Niles native, also designed the structure of the TNT building in addition to appearing in TNT plays.

To read about the New Trumbull Theatre, follow this link:
<https://www.nileshistoricalsociety.org/Stories2/TNT.htm>

The Pendleton Story

Mrs. Pendleton was one of the founding members of the Trumbull New Theater located in Niles. She has been very active in this theater group and this is her main hobby.

Frances Pendleton was born on February 1, 1912 in Detroit, Michigan. She was the daughter of William Charles and Margaret MacGergor Manchester.

In April 1938 she married Thorn Pendleton. They had three children: *Austin, Alex, and Margaret.*



AUSTIN PENDLETON: "My mother was an actress until my father saw her in a play, introduced himself backstage and eventually married her. She was always telling stories about the theater, and I've been crazy about acting since I was five." Austin eventually wended his way from home town, Warren, Ohio, to Yale, where he majored in English. Before graduating last summer, he wrote two musicals, one a musical tragedy about the conflict between pre-Civil War actor Edwin Booth and his teen-age son who wanted to follow in his steps. Austin finds writing for the theater even more satisfying than acting: "I can lose myself completely in writing; with acting, I never forget me." He plays a gnome-like youth driven by a domineering mom in the delightfully bizarre *Oh Dad, Poor Dad, Mama's Hung You in the Closet and I'm Feelin' So Sad* (left, with Barbara Harris)

Inside clip from TNT program featuring Austin Pendleton.

Austin Pendleton became interested in the theater through his mother, whose performances he watched when he was young. In junior high school, he put on his own performances in the basement of the family home. He participated in theater while attending Yale University, from which he graduated in 1961. Austin has written plays, performed in Broadway theatres, and appeared on television.

To read more about Austin Pendleton, follow the link:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Austin_Pendleton