

**David Prosser 1912-2012**

Sadly, we must inform you that *Dave Prosser* has passed away just 10 days short of his 100th birthday. He was a teacher of students in Niles and a friend to many people who have known him through the years. He was born February 24, 1912 and lived till February 14, 2012.

He served as a docent at the Ward-Thomas Museum for years. One time I found him telling a visitor about a stove-top hat like Lincoln wore. He turned it up side down and said, "Look at that price? 89.28 - I wouldn't pay that much for that hat, would you?" Later that day I told Dave that the number in the hat was not the price, but in fact it was the cataloging number we use to keep track of each items in the museum. He laughed and said, "Well, I'll straighten that out the next time I see them." He loved serving as a docent, for he liked people and enjoyed meeting them and telling the History of Niles. He gave the slide presentation of the "First Hundred Years of Niles" in the Westenfield Room. He didn't always stick to the written script; in fact, he always added his own interpretation of the picture on the screen. Some were quite funny.

David donated many items to the museum for visitors to enjoy seeing. . One was the very old bedroom set that belonged to his mother. It is in the second bedroom on the second floor. The bed has an old-fashioned spring and mattress set. The springs actually folds over in half, to allow you to disassemble it quickly and move it. There is also an original matching armoire for hanging clothes. Armoires are mainly used for people to hide their TV in today.

Dave's mother made him a soldier's uniform out of army wool material. He said it scratched when he wore it, so she put a lining in it. She also made a nurses cape for the little girl next door to wear so they could play "army" together. Those items are in the children's room on the second floor of the museum.

Dave was a sweet guy with an ornery streak which every one ignored. He was truly one of a kind. The world needs more people like Dave Prosser, honest and loveable. We miss him.

**Spring Dinner April 25, 2012**

The Spring Dinner committee, consisting of *Sandy Bilovesky, Pat Burgess-Fisher, Nancy Malone, and Donna Nellis*, are making plans for April 25<sup>th</sup> Dinner at Ciminero's in Niles. The doors will open at 5:30 and Ralph Tolbert will present "little seen" pictures that are in our collection, before and during dinner. Dinner will be served at 6:00pm and a program "*Underground Railroad Presentation*" will follow. Donation \$20.00 each and tickets are available from any member of the committee and by calling the office, leaving your name and phone number. 330.544.2143



**Niles Historical 2012 Officers**



*Seated: Nancy Malone, Vice President; Betty Whitney, President; Jessie Scott, Trustee; Roselyn Watson, trustee; Ruth Van Huffel, Corresponding Secretary; Fremont Camerino, Trustee; Pat Burgess-Fisher, Treasurer; Frank Burke, Assistant Treasurer, & Letha Pihonsky, Secretary.*



Niles Historical Society  
P. O. Box 368  
Niles, Ohio 44446

Non-profit  
Organization  
US Postage Paid  
Niles, OH  
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Visit our Website: [www.nileshistoricalsociety.org](http://www.nileshistoricalsociety.org)  
and check out the Photos and Stories links.

<b>Monthly Calendar</b>	
<b>Public Open House</b> The first Sunday of each month 2-5 p.m.  Private tours may be scheduled by calling: The office 330.544.2143  <b>Membership meetings</b> – 10:00am The first Saturday each month <b>Executive meeting</b> – 9:30am prior to membership meeting.	<b>Trustees:</b> Fremont Camerino, Jesse Scott, Roselyn Watson <b>Officers:</b> Betty Whitney.....President Nancy Malone.....Vice-President Letha Pihonsky.....Recording Secretary Ruth Van Huffel.....Corresponding Secretary Pat Burgess-Fisher.....Treasurer Frank Burke.....Assistant Treasurer  Anne Townley.....Program Editor Chairman Audrey John.....Research Editor Nancy Malone.....Education Editor Ralph Tolbert.....Technology Editor

**Group of Niles Historical Society members stuffing the envelopes for sales of “Streak Free” cloths.**



*Seated: Julie Mischevich, Betty Whitney, Pat Pfeifer, Ruth Van Huffel. Standing: George John, & Nancy Malone*

Now and then there is a rare product that stands up to what it proclaims it can do and we found such a product in “Streak Free” Cloths. We have decided to sell them in an effort to earn extra money for our building fund,



**15”x16” Microfiber cloths**

These are special designed microfiber cloths not sold in stores. These cloths are wonderful, chamois-like for washing windows, mirrors, computer screens, TV screens, pictures, eye glasses, counter tops, tile, stainless steel appliances, car windows, golf clubs, microwaves, plastic and vinyl. Just wet it, wring it, and wipe the surface. Never use window cleaner again. They remove grease, fingerprints, soap scum in the tub, general dust and dirt and give you streak free windows. They may be cut, washed in the washer with bleach & detergent and they last about 3 years of general use. (Do not use fabric softner, it will destroy them.)

We used them at the Ward-Thomas Museum and now have the cleanest windows in town. We couldn’t believe the ads till we tried them.. Saves work and cuts down on cleaning liquids. We ordered the special designed cloths from the supplier and packaged our own to share with you. We put the announcement in the paper and have had to re-order them 3 times. Once a person tries them, they buy more.

Most people buy several, one for the bath, one for kitchen, car and golf bags. Great for gifts too. Cost: \$5.00 each. All proceeds are placed in the *New Research/Lecture Center Building Fund* at the Ward-Thomas Museum.

The cloths are being sold by members of the society or you can call 330-544-2143, leave a number for a call back. Order by mail by sending \$5.00 + \$1.00 p+h, for each cloth. Send to Niles Historical Society, P. O. Box 368, Niles, Ohio 44446.

**Spring Dinner April 25, 2012 6:00 pm**

During his lifetime. *Ray Gilbert* had a remarkable ability to recall details of events long past. He was a prolific writer for area newspapers for nearly a half century. His many articles were written in the *Niles Times*, later compiled by *Grace Allison* into the book "**Walk Down Memory Lane**" which is presently on sale at the museum. The following is one story from the book.

## Ohio State Band, Niles, Ohio



*The Ohio State Band Organization* was formed in 1896 in Trumbull County under the guidance and directorship of *Prof. O. R. Farrar*. It functioned successfully in Warren for ten years under band leaders: *O. R. Farrar*, followed by *Prof. Chas. Hewitt*, *Prof. H. Thayer* and *William Ackley*.

Warren's famous Ohio State Band entered the year 1898 riding away up high on the crest of its popularity. They were also in debt to the tune of \$1,100. This was created by the issuance of a note to them and held by the First National Bank of Warren. With these funds new instruments were purchased. Also new and up-to-date band headquarters were acquired on Market Street not far from where the Robins Theatre now stands. There was a furniture store on the first floor. The spanking new band rooms were located on the second floor, and the third floor was used as a storage room by the furniture people. An elevator allowed access from the first to the third floor. The band members rehearsed nearly every night and they would play for parades, concerts and small parties. At one time the band had a membership of 35 regular players.

*Robert Elliott* was proprietor of the *Elliott Hotel* and also owner and manager of the *Warren Opera House*. A dance hall was on the third floor where the band could play. Mr. Elliott would furnish the hall, the heat, and the light and we would split 50-50 on the profits, if any. We advertised that the admission would be 11 cents for each and everyone attending.

The dances, we called them by a high sounding title: "Promenade Concerts," made an instant hit with the public. Great crowds came, more each time.

The fame of these concert dances spread. People from Niles, Girard, Youngstown, Sharon, New Castle, and even visitors from Pittsburgh and New York flocked in.

Money rolled in each time. The hall could accommodate between 400 to 500 people; and while it was somewhat crowded, yet they all had a grand time.

It is safe to say that those Promenade Concerts given by the Ohio State Band taught more young folks how to dance the Waltz, two-step, regular schottisches, Cuban Waltzes, etc., as was the fashion on the dance floor in those days with all of the dancing schools and instructors in the Mahoning Valley.

I venture to say that hundreds of Niles people took in those concert dances. A great many members of prominent clubs in Niles, such as the famous *Vendome Club*, the *Narcissus Club*, and many others, were regular attendants at those parties. In fact the dances were so much in demand that it was necessary to hold them two and sometimes three times a week. The band paid off their debt of \$1,100

Another time that summer the Ohio State Band played for the *Merchant's Picnic* at Conneaut, Pa. Six or eight of us stayed until the last train left on the main line of the Erie. We arrived in Warren about one o'clock in the morning (Sunday). When we reached the bandstand in Courthouse Park, one of the boys suggested that we play an open-air concert. And, we opened up with "*A Big Time In The Old Town Tonight*." We had just finished that one when the police arrived on the dead run and chased us out of there P.D.Q.

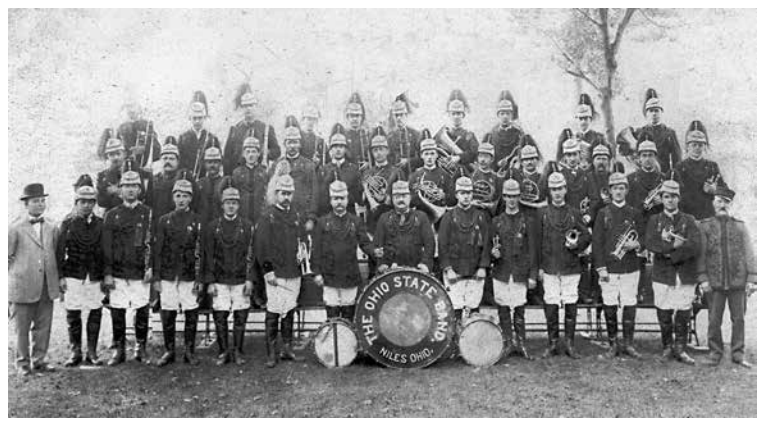
Interest died down in Warren for the band and on Oct. 7, 1906 a meeting was called and a proposition from *Bert Holloway* for the *Niles Business Men's League* offered to buy the band outright for \$400. It was accepted

So, in the year 1906, the great Ohio State Band became a Niles institution. *John L. McDermott* was made manager and *Prof. Charles Bittner* director. Niles was ready to support a band and have open - air concerts. So, the Ohio State Band became a local institution and remained the prize of our city for another four years.

The band played many important concerts outside of the area and presented each week, in the summer months, open-air concerts in the park, which is now the McKinley Memorial location.

Along about that time there was a roller skating rink built here in Niles, located right where the U. S. Post Office on West Park Avenue now stands. It was named *The Niles Amusement Company* and John L. McDermott, together with *Bill Thorns*, was in charge as manager. By special arrangement a band of seven members furnished the music for a couple of hours each evening. They were each paid \$1.15 per night. After a few weeks playing, the boys concluded that was not enough, so they made a demand for 10 cents per night more. This request the management refused to consider. Then we went on a strike and picketed the place. The Niles people (whether for the fun of it or not) backed us up to the limit with the result that the attendance fell down to almost nothing. After much loud and explosive talk the management gave in and we each received our \$1.25 per night.

But, with the increased musical activity in our public schools, and the formation of high school bands, interest in this famous band dwindled, and it finally passed out of the picture. The band folded its tents and silently faded out of sight, but not out of mind - at least in the memory of our older citizens.



A photograph accompanied Gilbert's 1940 article show the big bass drum "The Ohio State Band, Niles, Ohio" Among those in that picture were Supt. of Water and Lights of Niles, *Bert Holloway*, trombone; Service Director *Oliver Evans*, trombone; *Thomas Williams*, Baritone; *Seth Phillips*, flute and piccolo; *Thomas Evans*, a West Park Avenue florist, cornet; *W. R. Gilbert* altohphone; *Elmer Caladine*, cornet; *Russell (Rusty) Carter*, snare drum; *Prof. Chas. Bitner*, director; *John McDermott* (at the left), manger of the band; and *Jimmy McGaughey (Muggs Brawny)*, porter and handy man. As long as the Ohio State Band remained in existence, *A. Snelus* played the pearl-lined snare drum.



**Recent donations to the New Building Fund received:**

James Bernard Jr            in memory of James & Rose(Altiero) Bernard  
 John R. Hodge            in memory of Atty. Paul Z. & Isabelle Hodge  
 Nancy Hodge Valentine    in memory of Atty. Paul Z. & Isabelle Hodge  
 Catherine B. McMurray    in memory of Pete McMurray  
 Joe & Carol Smaltz        in memory of Joy Quilty

**Gift Donations:**

Rosemarie & Roger Bartscher  
 Robert Macali  
 Bob & Eva Doyle

**Our thanks to all who have recently donated to the building fund.**

Please remember if we are to build any type of a building to accommodate our forever growing collection and provide us with a lecture room for programs, it's going to take a lot of local money. Federal and State funds are **not** available for new building construction so that means, if we want this building, we'll have to do it ourselves. That is not going to be an easy task with the economic situation today, but if we each do a little part we can make it happen.

Preservation of the Niles area history is an ongoing project and we desperately need a room to accommodate the public. By having programs of interest presented to the public, we can grow within our local community, encouraging people to join and become active in the preservation of the Ward-Thomas Museum.

**So please consider donating to the New Building Fund.**

**Niles Historical Society Building Fund**

Please designate my gift for one of the memorial plaques.

**I would like my gift to be:**

- Platinum        \$35,000 - \$49,999
- Gold             \$20,000 - \$34,999
- Silver            \$5,000 - \$19,999
- Bronze          \$1,000 - \$4,999
- Other            \$ \_\_\_\_\_

In memory / in honor of: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Amount enclosed \_\_\_\_\_  
We are a 501c3 tax exempt organization

Mail to: Niles Historical Society, P.O. Box 368, Niles, Ohio 44446  
 Thank you for making a difference in the preservation of Niles history.

*Continued from page 2*

**Niles Historical Society Officers 2012**

Recently elected officers are: *Betty Whitney*, President; *Nancy Malone*, Vice President; *Letha Pihonsky*, Secretary; *Ruth Van Huffel*, Corresponding Secretary; *Pat Burgess-Fisher*, Treasurer; *Frank Burke*, Assistant Treasurer; Trustees: *Jessie Scott*, *Roselyn Watson*, *Fremont Camerino*.

We appreciate these people taking a position of responsibility to guide the Niles Historical Society as we become a stronger organization in the preservation of Niles area history. All serve as volunteers with a dedication to the needs of the society. We have a large and ever growing membership, and appreciate all the time various members donate to the actual workings of the society. If you would like to become actively involved in the "workings" of the society, there is a place for your talents, servings as a docent, gardening, sales, or maintenance. You are welcome to attend our meetings on the first Saturday of each month.

**For information, please call the office:  
 330-544-2143**



Since last year's Spring Dinner, additional photos have been donated to the Niles Historical Society. Attend this year's Spring Dinner for another walk down memory lane.

Just a small preview of the sights the Spring Dinner attendees will be thrilled to see: *Handy Andy Drive-in* restaurant in McKinley Heights and the inside lobby view of the *Antler Hotel* in downtown Niles.