

The Mahoning Valley Historical Society Newsletter

HISTORICAL HAPPENINGS



PRESERVING THE VALLEY'S HISTORY FOR 134 YEARS

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January & February 2010

Celebrate African American History Month & Women's History Month

Join the Historical Society, YSU's Center for Applied History, YSU Women's Studies and the Mahoning-Shenango History Club for a free lecture from the Ohio Humanities Council Speaker's Bureau.

African American Women During the Civil War

They were young and old, sisters, mothers, and grandmothers. Some were well-to-do, others were slaves. All resolved to be a part of the War that would ultimately determine the status of the Black man in America. This talk focuses on women of African descent—Susie King

Taylor who nursed with Clara Barton; Elizabeth Keckley, dressmaker and confidant to Mary Todd Lincoln; Charlotte Forten, college graduate and first African American to teach freed slaves in the south, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, and others—and their unique contributions to the war effort. Dr. Jefferson discusses how such women, without access to political power and often lacking material and/or financial resources, acted with strength of character and will to make meaningful contributions to the war that impacted the world and changed a nation.

Annette Jefferson holds an MA in Black Studies and a Ph.D. in Social Work, and works as a development officer in Human Services. She has spent more than 20 years developing her presentation and performing as Sojourner Truth across the state, including as part of Ohio Chautauque 2001. ✪

On Exhibit at the Arms Family Museum

Rayen High School Time Capsule

The Boy Scouts: A Centennial Celebration (Opens Feb. 13)

The Mahoning Valley Collects

On Air: A History of Mahoning Valley Broadcasting

The Valley Experience

The Story of My House

Event Information

Thursday,
March 4th
7:00 to 8:30 p.m.

Youngstown Historical
Center of Industry & Labor
(Steel Museum)
151 W. Wood Street
Youngstown

Holiday in Motion

The 2009 Holiday season is over, and the results are in for the Holiday in Motion display. Three thousand, three hundred and fifty seven visitors enjoyed the vintage ornaments, trains and Santas during the month of December. That number doubles the total attendance from last year's success.

Numerous individuals, companies, and volunteers helped to make Holiday in Motion such a success. Thank you to everyone involved!

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Ed Drennen
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Petitti Garden Center
Anthony Worrellia
Youngstown Plastic Fabricators

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Priscilla Sutton
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Media & Publicity

The Vindicator
WFMJ
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The Historical Society's Capital Campaign begins the New Year having surpassed two thirds of its \$6 million goal! Total pledges and receipts from private and public funding sources for 2009 equal \$4.048 Million or 67.47% of goal. Thanks to the dedication, support, and hard work of the Board, volunteers, and staff of the Mahoning Valley Historical Society, the campaign to transform a landmark building on West Federal Street into a multi-faceted history center is on track and gaining momentum.

Campaign development in 2010 will include efforts to increase advocacy and political support for the project by attracting Republican and Democratic state and local leadership to tour the site and gain first-hand knowledge of the Historical Society's mission. Speaker of the House Armond Budish and other House leaders will tour the Burt Building on February 18. ✎

From This Direction

Happy New Year! In 2010 we begin the second decade of the 21st Century, and can look back on some significant anniversaries of historical events. Fifty years ago, in November 1960, a small majority of American voters elected John F. Kennedy, the country's first and only Roman Catholic president and the first one born in the 20th Century. In November 1860, Abraham Lincoln won the Presidency by a plurality of the vote, and his election touched off a most calamitous and pivotal period in American history—the Civil War.

The year 1910 was significant one our region. The Reuben McMillan Free Library Association opened their new Public Library building in Youngstown on the corner of Wick and Rayen Avenues that year. Our Historical Society operated in a room on the second floor of this building for the next 50 years. Youngstown had an assessed property valuation of \$163.7 Million that year and was ranked third among Ohio cities for the volume and value of its manufactured products, thanks to the booming steel industry. In 1910 there were 447 registered automobiles in Mahoning County, ranking us eighth among all Ohio counties.

Historical Society members and friends will have opportunities to learn more about these facets of our history later this year in programs sponsored by the Young Leaders Advisory Board. I hope to see many of you on Thursday, March 4, when we welcome Dr. Annette Jefferson to Youngstown and learn about African American women during the Civil War.

~H. William Lawson

Get your Hands-On:

Youngstown - Ohio's Most Progressive City

Rebecca Whittenberger, Curator of Education

The education department recently welcomed a new acquisition to its educational artifact collection: a section from the *Youngstown Vindicator* dated Wednesday, July 1, 1931, donated in honor of Mary Jean Walsh.



This particular edition, which cost three cents in 1931, features an article emblazoned with the headline: "Youngstown – Ohio's Most Progressive City." Underneath is the phrase "Those Responsible for its Progress" along with the pictures of three of the city's leaders: Mayor Joseph L. Heffernan (who also happened to be the city's first Irish Catholic mayor); Law Director, Carl Armstrong; and Finance Director, James E. Jones.

Underneath their pictures is an article titled "A Message on City Government" by Joseph L. Heffernan, Mayor of Youngstown. In the article, Heffernan reflects on how he and his staff have run the city's finances during his three and a half years in office. He writes that he takes "much pride in our municipal financing" and that he "decided at the outset that the basis of administrative success was careful handling of public money." Heffernan praises the prudence of his finance director and the advice of his law director, and commends various city features, such as the improved streets, the park department, fire department, inspection bureau, water department, and the department of public health. In the second half of the article, Heffernan discusses at length the responsibility of local citizens to understand and support municipal government: "...In no department of self-government have we more need of common sense and genuine patriotism than in our municipal affairs."

He believes that the success of municipal government is dependent on the people: "Democracy can be a success, but we have ourselves failed to make it a success. Municipal government can be made to work, but we – too many of us – refuse to make it work. The people in Youngstown need not worry about their form of government if they sincerely and intelligently devote themselves to it." ✎



Rueben McMillan Free Library, 1965.

History to Go

The Young Leaders Advisory Board will again sponsor the free lecture series, *History to Go* this spring and summer. The spring schedule includes a walking tour of Downtown Youngstown on Saturday, April 24th; and a panel discussion celebrating the anniversary of the Public Library of Youngstown and Mahoning County on May 13th.

Summer events will feature a visit to the Columbiana County residence of Dick Best, a vehicle collector, who owns the only known surviving examples of the Mahoning and Freedonia automobiles; a Steel Heritage tour; and a bus tour of other local Historical Societies. Dates and times for the summer events will be announced in the next issue of *Historical Happenings*. ✎

Artifact-ually Speaking

Pamela L. Speis, Archivist

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Sight & Sound

Business & Media Archives of the Mahoning Valley

This coming February 8th marks the centennial of the founding of the Boy Scouts of America, who were incorporated on that date in 1910.

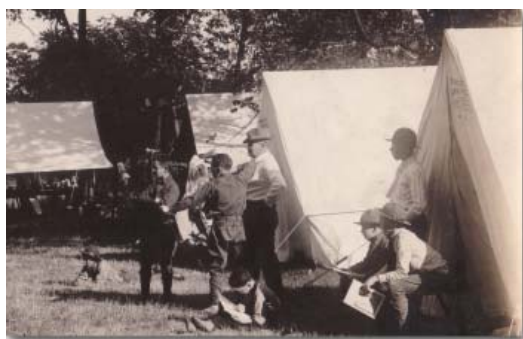
Chicagooan William D. Boyce had encountered a British Boy Scout while on a trip to London in 1909. Boyce had been so impressed with the scout that he met with Scouting founder Sir Robert Baden Powell, and returned to the United States with scouting literature, uniforms and insignias. Copies of Baden Powell's book "Scouting for Boys" had already begun circulating and interest was ripe. The Y.M.C.A. and other like-minded organizations provided additional support for the new organization.



Tent of Youngstown Boys at the Scout Camp at Randal Fair, 1913.

Here in the Mahoning Valley, scouting became a reality through the work of civic minded leaders who organized three troops by 1912: Troop 9 sponsored by the First Presbyterian Church in Girard with Rev. Jesse H. Beard as scoutmaster; Troop 19 sponsored by the Rodef Sholom Temple in Youngstown under scoutmaster Herbert Hartzell; and Troop 23 sponsored by Richard Brown Memorial Methodist Church under the direction of R. C. McBride – this troop reorganized as Troop 4 in 1918.

The first local Boy Scout council organizational meeting was held March 25, 1913 to discuss chartering by the national organization. George W. Alloway, Rev. James Baird, a Mr. Horton of Pittsburgh, and Father Kirby of St. Rose Catholic Church in



Troop 23, Summer Campout at Scoutmaster Charlie McBride's dad's homestead on Grand River in West Farmington. circa 1913-1916. From John Wallis interview with Tony Valley.

Girard attended. An organizational meeting was held in the following week with election of officers. George L. Fordyce was elected Council President. J. P. Colleran, president of City Council was elected Vice-President., and James L. Wick, Jr. served as the first Treasurer of the Council. A separate committee made up of A. H. Dillon, W. W. Zimmerman, and R. R. E. Whelan was appointed to draft a constitution and by-laws for the council. Phillip J. Thompson, Dr. George Peck, Leo Guthman, Hugh Grant and Lionel Evans (future mayor of Youngstown) nominated John H. Chase as Scout Commissioner with Phillip J. Thompson serving as Chairman of the Court of Honor.

Other community leaders taking an active part in the early efforts of the Youngstown Council were: Dr. C. O. Brown, J. Fearnley Bonnell, Herbert S. Hartzell, I. Harry Meyer, Harry Levinson, R. C. McBride, and Phil Hardy. The Youngstown Council was granted a charter April 1, 1913 and supervised scouting for the Youngstown, Girard and Niles area. ✪

Resources: Book - "Boy Scouts in Mahoning County 1911-1993" by Tony Valley, Jr.

The Business & Media Archives staff are continuing to conduct oral histories of people from the Mahoning Valley. Two recent interviews include Dorothy Honey, past registrar and guide at the Mahoning Valley Historical Society, and Clara Louise Schafer.

Mrs. Honey told us about her memories of eating at the Burt building when she was a little girl:



This is the middle of the 1920's and that was the era of F. Scott Fitzgerald, the Great Gatsby, a period of excess. I was 12 and I had a cousin who was about the same age as I and we kind of lived in a fantasy world. I chose to be Laura La Plant, a lovely blond actress of the silent film era. My cousin chose to be Beebe Daniels. So Beebe

and Laura wanted to do something quite special and we were in this fantasy land and thought the place most worthy and most appropriate for silent film actresses would be Burt's. It was a famous ice cream and chocolate maker and restaurant. Now in this same period there was the great raccoon coat craze. I had a cousin that lived in our home and she had a raccoon coat. So I hemmed this coat and I got into it. I must have looked like a raccoon. And I boarded the public transportation at that time which was a street car. And I headed for Beebe Daniels, Burts ice creams, and West Federal Street. It was a great experience. We decided we would eat in a booth. Now the booths were about 5 inches from the main floor. So we climbed up into the booth and there we lunched. At Burts special ice cream and chocolates place, worthy of two silent screen actresses.

Mrs. Schafer, who died this past November, shared with us her memories of her long life of over one hundred years living in the Valley. Those memories included many trips to downtown movie theaters with her father, and her Grandparent's hotel that was on North Phelps Street downtown until it burned down when she was in high school:

Grandpa had a hotel restaurant down on Phelps street, across from the old entrance to Strouss Hersbergs and there was nothing on the street practically but them.. The night of the fire, we lived on Lincoln Ave. We'd all been to a movie theater, I forget which one it was now, and mother and dad, Marge and I had all gone to bed. The firemen called and said: 'Mr. Wilson, I think you better get down here, there's quite a fire at the hotel.' Phelps Street then was on a little hill, and Marge and I and Ernie, my brother, stood there looked down and we could see the flames coming up. I knew that mother was not going to wait there for dad so she got in her old electric car and went down to Phelps Street. By the time she got there dad had gone into what was left of the hotel. The only thing that was left was a mug, that was the only thing saved out of the whole hotel.



Hotel Salow, 1900

The Business & Media Archives will continue their efforts to videotape the people of our area and to capture their memories for future citizens and scholars. If you know of an individual with an interesting story to tell, please contact Connie Jones at 330-744-7621. ✪

The Mahoning Valley Historical Society celebrates the history of the people of the Mahoning Valley.



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Historical Happenings

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MVHS is a private non-profit corporation, which owns and operates the Arms Family Museum of Local History, the MVHS Archival Library, and the Business and Media Archives of the Mahoning Valley.

Leann Rich, editor



Historic Preservation Awards

Applications for the 2010 Historic Preservation Awards Program will be available at the Historical Society office starting Monday, February 8th, with a Friday, April 9th deadline.

Historical Society Online

New videos are now uploaded to the Historical Society's YouTube channel. Included are a promotional video produced by the Education and Business & Media Archives staff; An interview with Carol Potter, the Historical Society's Campaign Director, produced by the *Business-Journal*; and a video review of the Holiday in Motion display produced by Connie Jones, Business & Media Archives project director. A link to the YouTube channel can be found on www.mahoninghistory.org

Upcoming Events

- | | | |
|-----------------------|--|-----------|
| Saturday, February 13 | <i>The Boy Scouts: A Centennial Celebration</i>
Opening at The Arms Family Museum | |
| Thursday, March 4 | African American Women in the Civil War
Youngstown Historical Center of Industry and Labor
151 W. Wood Street, Youngstown | 7:00 p.m. |
| Saturday, April 24 | <i>History to Go</i>
Downtown Youngstown Walking Tour
Gathering location TBD | 3:00 p.m. |
| Thursday May 13 | <i>History to Go</i>
Public Library Panel Discussion
Main Branch, 305 Wick Avenue, Youngstown | 7:00 p.m. |

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