

The Mahoning Valley Historical Society Newsletter

HISTORICAL HAPPENINGS



PRESERVING THE VALLEY'S HISTORY FOR 132 YEARS

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May & June 2008

In this issue

- **Feature Story:**
Burt Building Progress
- **From This Direction**
- **Get Your Hands On:**
History Day
- **Artifact-ually Speaking:**
New Collections
- **Sight & Sound:**
Six Degrees of History

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Burt Building Purchase: A Progress Report

The Mahoning Valley Historical Society made the public announcement of the purchase of the Harry Burt/Ross Radio building on West Federal Street in Downtown Youngstown. Here's what's happening now:

- The Board of Directors and staff have begun to assign spaces for programming at the downtown building, and will soon begin the design phase.
- This project has required the Historical Society staff to dig deeper into the archives to find any piece of information related to Harry Burt and the building at 325 West Federal Street, and we encourage you to do the same! Do you have (or have you heard) any stories about time spent at Burts? Or, any stories from the early days of Ross Radio? Please share your memories, memorabilia and photographs!
- This project provides an opportunity for the Historical Society to practice and promote historic preservation and adaptive reuse. In the aftermath of the building purchase, a nomination was prepared and submitted to the Ohio Historic Preservation Office to place the building on the National Register of Historic Places. *From This Direction* will elaborate on the status of the nomination with officials in Columbus and Washington, D.C.



A sketch from The Youngstown Vindicator for the grand opening of Burts in 1922. Image courtesy of The Vindicator

- The Board of Directors has hired Charles H. Bentz & Associates, a national fundraising firm to organize and direct a six million dollar capital and endowment campaign to finance the project. The process will include cultivating and enlisting campaign leaders and volunteers and the solicitation of gifts from area businesses, corporations, foundations, and individuals.
- Over the next four issues of *Historical Happenings*, each floor of the building will be featured with plans, illustrations and information from Harry Burt's 1922 grand opening booklet, historic and current interior photos and updates on the design process. Stay tuned! ☺

Mahoning Valley Historical Society's 133rd Annual Meeting

Tuesday, June 17, 2007 ~ 5:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Stambaugh Auditorium ~ Christman Room

\$35 for MVHS members - \$40 for Guests

The evening will include

- Election of Directors
- The Fourth Annual Historic Preservation Awards Program
- New program information and plans for the proposed History Center

Watch for your invitation in mid-May!

Welcome

New Members!

Edward's Florist Shops, Inc.
Deborah Hagg
Mr. & Mrs. Jeff Kuczek
Judge Robert & Kay Milich
Joellen C. O'Neill

Time to Renew!

Information on renewing your membership will be forthcoming at the beginning of June. If you have friends or family that you think will enjoy the benefits of MVHS membership, we would be happy to send a membership packet. Call or email prospective information to (330) 743-2589 or mvhs@mahoninghistory.org.

Current members that refer new prospects will receive a Museum Shop gift certificate!

Archives Wish List

The MVHS Archives is seeking funds to purchase the following books:

Blacks in Ohio 1880, Vol. 8 by Paul E. Nitchman, \$17.50

Blacks in Ohio 1880, Vol. 10 by Paul E. Nitchman. \$17.50

Ohio Towns and Townships to 1900: A Location Guide, by Julie Minot Overton. \$41.00

Please contact Archivist Pam Speis if you would like to contribute. ✉

History to Go!

The Valley's Garden: 50 Years in the Making

The final installment of the popular 2007-2008 *History to Go* lecture series will be a celebration of Fellows Riverside Gardens during their 50th anniversary. On Thursday, June 12th from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. enjoy a tour of this beloved Youngstown landscape that will focus on its rich history and exciting future. Afterwards, a cocktail party will be held at the D.D. & Velma Davis Education & Visitor Center where hors d'oeuvres, wine and light beverages will be served with live music. Come and experience why Fellows Riverside Gardens has been a favorite respite for Valley residents for the past five decades. Cost: \$10 per person (reservations are recommended). This event is rain or shine - in case of severe weather, an indoor lecture will be presented. ✉

From This Direction

On April 4, 2008, this writer had the pleasure of traveling to Columbus to attend the meeting of the Ohio Historic Site Preservation Advisory Board. Accompanying me were preservation consultant and former MVHS Board member Rebecca Rogers, current Board member Janice Tattrie, and Immediate Past President Dr. Bill Cleary.

The purpose of the OHSPAB meeting was to review and recommend nominations for several historic buildings, sites and districts from throughout Ohio to be added to the National Register of Historic Places. Among them was the Harry Burt/Ross Radio Building, whose nomination was written by Ms. Rogers. Therefore we attended to support the nomination and to answer any additional questions from the OHSPAB members.

The nomination passed with flying colors, and advisory board members complemented our contingent on our well-prepared and entertaining narrative. Since the Burt Building nomination was the last one reviewed by the OHSPAB, the staff of the Ohio Historic Preservation Office surprised everyone in attendance by handing out Good Humor® ice cream bars afterward!

The nomination and the positive recommendation from the advisory board are now at the National Park Service in Washington DC, who will make the final determination of worthiness of placing the Harry Burt/Ross Radio Building on the National Register. All in all, this past April 4 was an important and whimsical day for the Historical Society on what was the 86th anniversary of Harry Burt's opening of his new retail store and candy and ice cream factory at 325 West Federal Street in downtown Youngstown.

~H. William Lawson

Get your Hands-On:

History Day!

Rebecca Whittenberger, Curator of Education

The Historical Society has participated in History Day at Youngstown State University for over 20 years. This annual competition allows students from schools all over the Mahoning Valley the opportunity to research, create and present a history project featuring a specific theme. This year's theme was "Conflict and Compromise." Our role is to judge the projects that feature a specific local history theme, and then present our own local history awards to those students whose projects excelled in both research and presentation. This year's winners are:

First Place: Alexandria Hickman and Katherine Phillips - "The Grass is Always Greener on the Other Side of the Picket Line" Springfield Local

Second Place: Catherine Evan, Rachael Hilderbrand and Ashli Vinkler "Youngstown Steel Mill Conflicts" Springfield Local High School

Third Place: Clarion Adams, Cristalee Figueroa, Krystal Hill, and Bridgette Santiago "Black Monday: the demise of the steel mills" Hayes Middle School

Special Mentions: Shiann Reali, "Kent State University Shootings," St. Charles School; Henriette Ovaska and Christina Robb, "Good River Gone Bad," Holy Family School; Kristina Aiad-Toss, "Women's Suffrage" ✉



History on Stage Summer Camp

Now is the time to register your child for another exciting edition of our annual summer camp! This year, children will help create, direct, produce and star in a play based on the diary of an early pioneer woman who journeyed to northeast Ohio in 1810. The week includes historic games, crafts and prop-making, and on the final day the children will perform their play for family and friends! Registration fee includes a t-shirt!

When: Monday-Thursday, June 16-19
Time: 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Ages: 7-12
Cost: \$18 for MVHS members; \$20 for guests
To register: 330-743-2589 or education@mahoninghistory.org



Artifact-ually Speaking

Pamela L. Speis, Archivist

MVHS recently received two historically important collections. One collection adds to our significant holdings from church congregations for the area. The other provides wonderful original photographs and research regarding scouting in the Mahoning Valley.



*First Slovak Presbyterian
35th anniversary 1954*

Beverly Thomas Kredel on behalf of the former John Calvin St. Paul's United Church of Christ congregation donated original church records pertaining to the congregations of: St. Paul's United Church of Christ, 1894-1972; John Calvin Presbyterian Church, 1917-1971; and John

Calvin – St. Paul United Church of Christ, 1972 – 2007.

St. Paul's United Church of Christ was originally known as St. Paul's Evangelical and Reformed Church, a.k.a St. Paul's Reformed Church, located at Oak Hill and Glenaven. It merged with John Calvin Presbyterian, formerly known as the Slovak Presbyterian Church located at Shirley Road and Taylor Street, in 1972, becoming the John Calvin St. Paul's United Church of Christ from 1972-2007. The collection includes membership records, baptisms, marriages, deaths, and congregational histories for each of the congregations. Early records for John Calvin Presbyterian are written in Slovak. A finding aid is being prepared for this collection.

Of equal interest to the historical record, Tony Valley donated his large research collection pertaining to the Mahoning Valley Council Boy Scouts of America. Much of the collection was accumulated, and in some cases literally



Scouts on the archery range.

rescued from the trash by Mr. Valley during his research and writing of a book published in 1993 about the history of the Mahoning Valley Council and Camp Stambaugh. The collection includes scrapbooks compiled by scouting executive Henry Katschke; original photographs dating from the 1910s up to 1993; manuscript materials and ephemera related to council and scouting activities in our area. 🏹

Business & Media Archives of the Mahoning Valley

Six Degrees of History

James Ross opened Ross Radio, Incorporated, in February 1930. The wholesale business sold all electronics that were then commercially available, and then these products were in great demand in the Mahoning Valley region. In 1935, James Ross purchased the Burt Building from the Burt family, moving Ross Radio, Inc. to 325-327 West Federal Street. At its largest, about 1955, Ross Radio employed more than thirty people. One of the three salesmen served industrial clientele, particularly the Youngstown steel industries. The other two salesmen responded to the needs of regional stores such as Strouss-Hirshberg and McKelvey's, two of Youngstown's department stores, which sold televisions and other electronics. Other employees repaired electronic components still under warranty.



*A view of Ross Radio on
West Federal Street, 1950*



C.M. Chorpening

Also in the early 1930s, two Youngstown electrical engineers and radio pioneers, C. M. Chorpening and F. H. Woodworth, founded Astatic Electrical Company. The business designed, patented, and produced microphones and phonographic equipment and related products from a commercial/light industrial building on Youngstown's south side. Ross Radio was the local distributor of Astatic components. About 1940, James Ross

bought a majority share of Astatic, and became chairman of the board. With financial control, Ross moved Astatic to Conneaut, Ohio, where it occupied existing industrial plants for production of electronic components. During World War II, Astatic produced sonar units for the US War Department. For most of the years that Ross owned both businesses, Ross lived in Youngstown, commuting early each morning to Conneaut, returning each afternoon to Ross Radio on West Federal Street where he did most of the buying and inventory control. Astatic Commercial Audio Products continues manufacturing in 2008, located in Solon, Ohio.



*Astatic microphones and booklet in
the Business & Media Archives
collection. The center microphone
was the model manufactured in
Youngstown.*

Can you identify how C.M. Chorpening connects these two stories to the Mahoning Valley Historical Society collections? Call or email with your guess by May 23rd - if you're right you'll be entered to win a framed print from the Business & Media Archives collection. The answer will be on the MVHS website after the 23rd, and will appear in the next issue of *Historical Happenings*. There is a clue in one of the images! 🏹

The Mahoning Valley Historical Society,

founded in 1875, educates and promotes an interest in the history of the Mahoning Valley by collecting, preserving and developing material representative of the people who have inhabited the region.



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Wick Avenue Festival

On Saturday, July 12th and in tandem with YSU's Summer Festival of the Arts the cultural institutions along Wick Avenue will open their doors for a Wick Avenue Festival. This free event will celebrate the cultural gems in our community and will feature food, demonstrations, crafters and other activities up and down the street. Start at the Arms Family Museum and collect clues in various buildings down the Avenue to the Youngstown Historical Center, on Wood Street, where you can enter to win one of two \$500 cash prizes. July 12th will be a fun day for the whole family! 🐾

Upcoming Events

Thursday June 12	History to Go Historic Fellows Riverside Gardens Tour	6:00 to 8:30 p.m.
Tuesday June 17	MVHS Annual Meeting Christman Room, Stambaugh Auditorium	5:30 - 8:30 p.m.
Monday-Thursday June 16-19	History on Stage MVHS Summer Camp Arms Family Museum	10:00 a.m. to Noon
Saturday July 12	Free Museum Open House Wick Avenue Festival	10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

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