

# The Mahoning Valley Historical Society Newsletter

## HISTORICAL HAPPENINGS



PRESERVING THE VALLEY'S HISTORY FOR 134 YEARS

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September & October 2009

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Contact MVHS for  
information about:

- Membership
- Museum Tours
- Archival Library
- Outreach Programs
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## FOUNDERS DAY 2009

### Guest Speaker: Mark Peyko

Mark C. Peyko is editor and publisher of *The Metro Monthly*, based in Youngstown, Ohio, and co-producer of the local television program, "Homeplate with Casey Malone." He is president of the North Side Citizens' Coalition for Community Development and has served two terms on the Board of Directors for the Mahoning Valley Historical Society. Peyko was contacted in 2007 by the The History Press (Salem, MA and Charleston, SC) to see if he would compile from his newspaper's history articles a title on Youngstown, Ohio. The published work represents articles that had appeared between 1992 and 2008 in *The Metro Monthly*, with one new article.



"Remembering Youngstown: Tales from the Mahoning Valley" was created. Whenever history and journalism are able to cross paths, it's a good thing. History gives perspective; it allows readers to better understand present-day situations and dilemmas. Even in breaking news, background history can give readers a critical depth of understanding.

However, history can mislead. It makes fools of us through its silence, by what has been willfully omitted in the dusty volumes of a research library. Because historical record is susceptible to misinterpretation and abuse, it is important to seek the truth. History is not always beautiful or comforting, but that is often what makes it worth exploring.

Despite these pitfalls, history remains one of the best ways to examine and interpret culture. The following volume features some of the best history articles that have appeared in *The Metro Monthly* since its inception. As publisher, Peyko has chosen articles that reflect a broad range of subject matter. Although this book does not cover the total history of the Mahoning Valley, it does include some of the more-interesting aspects of Youngstown history. In addition, Peyko thinks it accurately reflects the consistently broad and varied interests of *The Metro Monthly*.

Youngstown, Ohio is rich in history. Due to its ethnicity and diverse culture, the town is a much bigger city than its present-day population numbers would suggest. To the casual observer, Youngstown may appear to be a series of interconnected urban legends and exaggerations, but if you work in the media long enough you will find out that many of these stories are true. What happens in Vegas may stay in Vegas, but what happens in Youngstown is told for generations.


Youngstown is filled with great storytellers. Peyko hopes this volume lives up to that well-respected tradition. ✨

Mark Peyko holds a master's degree in historic preservation planning from Eastern Michigan University and a bachelor's degree in English from Youngstown State University.

### FOUNDERS DAY DINNER Our 134<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Thursday, September 10, 2009  
5:30 to 8:00 p.m.

McMahon Hall, in Mill Creek MetroParks Farm on Rte. 46 in Canfield. Meet Mark Peyko. Signed copies of his book will be available to order with your dinner reservation at a 15% discount with proceeds to benefit the Historical Society. For reservations call 330-743-2589. Sponsored in part by Farmers Trust Company.



The Mahoning Valley Historical Society's Capital Campaign is nearing the 60% mark of the \$6 million goal with receipts and pledges from private and public funding sources.

On July 29, 2009, the Campaign received official notification of support from Mayor Jay Williams and the City of Youngstown. The City applauds the Historical Society and its leadership for preserving a landmark building and making a significant contribution to the revitalization of the west end of the central business district.

The Mahoning Valley Historical Society Board of Directors thanks Mayor Williams and Sarah V. Lown, City of Youngstown Economic Development Incentive Manager, for their support to the development of this valuable community asset.

~ Carol Potter  
Campaign Director

**CityScape**

**"Sacred Landmarks Tour,"  
Saturday, September 26**

The tour will visit four churches: Sts. Cyril & Methodius, Martin Luther Lutheran Church, The Youngstown Metro Church (formerly Free Gospel) and St. John's Episcopal. A guide will greet the group and give a brief history of the congregation with a description of the building's architecture and a tour. Lunch will be served following the last stop on the tour, provided by The Youngstown Club. Tickets (limited number) must be purchased in advance: \$35 each.

For more information, contact CityScape at 330-742-4040 or cityscapedirector@sbcglobal.net.

**From This Direction**

Though it's no longer recognizable as the house shown in the 19<sup>th</sup> century photograph below, this structure is still very much part of the historic and cultural fabric of Youngstown's Wick District.

It was built in 1865-66 by the widow of a local business leader who died of disease while serving in the Union Army during the Civil War. It was occupied between 1866 and 1959 by three generations of the same family. It was then sold to a nearby church to serve as a parish house, and later to Youngstown State University to be used for office space.



A century ago this house was completely remodeled, and its exterior design transformed from Italianate to an Italian-style villa. Though the name and function of the property changed over the years - from the Arms/Booth/Schaff House, to Disciple House of First Christian Church, to the current Alumni House - it remains at 606 Wick Avenue as the oldest of the grand houses to be built in this neighborhood in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Join us on Sunday afternoon, September 13, for walking tours along Wick Avenue as part of the Founders Day Open House at the Arms Family Museum of Local History. There is diverse historic and modern architecture to see, and many more interesting stories to be told!

~ H. William Lawson



**FOUNDERS DAY  
OPEN HOUSE**

**Sunday, September 13  
1:00 to 5:00 p.m.**

**The Arms Family Museum  
648 Wick Avenue**

Enjoy tours of the Arms Family Museum, walking tours of Wick Avenue, games and activities for kids. Opening of the **Mahoning Valley Collects** Exhibit.  
**Free Public Open House**

**Get your Hands-On:**

**Summer Camp Wrap-Up**

Rebecca Whittenberger, Curator of Education

Three successful summer camps were held at the Arms Family Museum this year, and twenty-five children enjoyed a variety of activities, crafts, and games related to the following three themes:

**"Beautifully Useful!"** Decorative Arts Camp, June 23-26. Using the period rooms at the Arms mansion as a special backdrop, campers created special decorative arts & crafts that had both beauty and function. The final day of camp featured a special tea party on the back porch of the historic mansion. Lea Mollman, Registrar, was our guest speaker and taught our campers the unique details of the proprieties of taking tea during the late Victorian era.

**"Pioneer Days!"** July 14-17. Campers learned about the lives of the early pioneers by playing old-fashioned games and making special pioneer crafts.

Special activities included making butter, washing clothes using real washboards, making writing ink out of blueberries, and learning how to use and operate an old-fashioned loom on display in our Hands-On Room.



**"Hi-Tech History"** Video Camp, August 4-7. Campers learned to create, produce, direct and film their own historical documentary. Using our replica of a log cabin and many original and replicated pioneer artifacts, campers created a video about the lives of the early pioneers who came here to Ohio. Watch for this video to be posted on our website in the near future! ✨

**Hot Nights ...Cool Delights**

**Thank You!**

The Young Leaders Advisory Board thanks the following contributors and volunteers: Charlotte C. Gelhaar, Jeanne D. Tyler, Frank A. Rulli, Thymely Events, Youngstown Central Area Community Improvement Corporation, City of Youngstown, Carol Potter & Charet Premier, Second Avenue Project, Leslie Limbian, Anita Limbian, Paul Hagman, John Mosier, Terri Labeledz, Leann Rich, Mary Ann & Mike Richards, JoAnne & Jerry Nunziato, Pam Speis, Jessica Trickett and Chuck Kelso. **Our guest bartenders** serving up the "Harry Burtinis" were State Representative Robert F. Hagan, former Miss Ohio and BelDuetto member, Amanda Beagle and Todd Hancock of Easy Street Productions.

## Artifact-ually Speaking

Pamela L. Speis, Archivist

This Founders Day we are pleased to feature the new book *Remembering Youngstown: Tales from the Mahoning Valley*, edited by Mark Peyko. In addition to rollicking good anecdotal narratives about happenings in the Valley, the book utilizes a number of images contributed by Tom Molocea through his "Historic Images," drawing on the photographic work of John D. Megown. Megown was a focus of our photographic hallway exhibit earlier this Spring. Many of these same illustrations are represented in the collection of glass-plate negatives and digital scans Mahoning Valley Historical Society owns. Megown's talent for being in the right place at the right time shines through this collection, made possible through separate donations by members of the Megown family and through the courtesy of Mr. Molocea. The Society has begun to create contact prints from Megown's original glass-plate negatives for use as a visual catalog to his work. Those interested in the photography of John D. Megown are encouraged to visit our archival library.

Also of interest in our photographic holdings are more recent images by Francis P. Conroy, who specialized in using natural light for his striking slide work. Conroy, born in 1919, was a structural engineer and an amateur photographer. After his death in 2003, his daughter Maurita Hoffmann donated her father's collection of 35mm slides to the Mahoning Valley Historical Society.

Of particular interest within Conroy's collection are unique views of the Suspension Bridge in Mill Creek Park, Lanterman's Mill and Falls, Fellows Riverside Gardens, and floral displays. One of his most beautiful images is a scene of the Ohio Works and Jeannette Blast Furnace in September 1986 at twilight. This image (right) was recently on display at YLAB's "Hot Nights ... Cool Delights" event in July. Conroy's work dates primarily from 1980-1988. Our growing collection of the works of local photographers offers a pleasant journey through the Valley's past for those who stop at the archival library looking for glimpses of the timeless artistry for the past, present and future.



The Mahoning Valley Historical Society actively collects samples of work by local photographers and photographic materials depicting local subjects and scenes from all time periods. Please contact us if you would like to see our collection, or to help us make our collection grow. ✨

### Other Mark Peyko Publications:

"Understanding the Downtown," an architectural guide to downtown Youngstown, (1990); "Notes From Youngstown; The Angry Voice of a City Left Behind," The New York Times (February 28, 2002) Op-Ed column published in all editions; "Made in Youngstown: Architecture, History, Culture, Minutia," Weblog on U.S. history and culture with a focus on historic preservation, Youngstown and American culture. Peyko has published historical articles in *The Metro Eye* and *The Metro Monthly* since 1992.

## Sight & Sound

### Business & Media Archives of the Mahoning Valley

Al Rucker, born in Hubbard, Ohio on January 1, 1938, says "he was born at the exact [right] moment in time." You may remember Al Rucker as the host of the Rumpus Room that aired on WKBN and then on WFMJ in the early 1950's.

Al started out on air at age eleven as one of the cast members in a radio program on WKBN called Enchanted Forest. In 1953, when television had just started in Youngstown, local stations were working hard to fill all the time available. At the age of fifteen, Al found himself producing, staging and writing a weekly half-hour program.



Rumpus Room was aimed at the teenage audience and the show was a local *hit parade* with the cast lip-synching with the records. Al worked at WKBN for fourteen months where he also created a radio show called Varsity with a combination of hit tunes and sport scores. Since there was no regular sponsor at WKBN the cast was working for free. In January of 1955, Rumpus Room moved to WFMJ where the cast was paid \$50 a week with a small costume budget.

By the summer of 1957, Al was 19 years old, he packed his bags and moved to New York City where in 1959 he changed his name to Clay Cole and began a show called the Clay Cole Show which ran from 1959 to 1968. After the show was over he became a writer, producer and director and eventually a two-time Emmy Award winner. Al Rucker, aka Clay Cole, is retired and lives in coastal North Carolina and recently completed his memoir "*Sh-Boom! The Explosion of Rock 'n' Roll (1953-1968)*" due to be released in mid-October 2009. The author plans a trip back to Youngstown in the Fall for some press interviews, book signings and a reunion with the Rumpus Room cast. ✨

## 'Tis the Season

After last year's very successful holiday attendance, plans immediately began in January for the 2009 "Holiday in Motion" display! This will be a self guided tour with rare one-of-a kind, mechanical and motion Christmas decorations, antique trains, dozens of 50's era aluminum trees, a 9-foot tree with hundreds of vintage ornaments, Santas dating back to the 1800's, religious traditions and Youngstown's own Plakie Toy "Twinkler" heat motion ornaments! Volunteer docents are being recruited to staff stations throughout the first floor of the museum to provide a watchful eye over the collections and to answer questions from guests. Regular shifts are Tuesday through Sunday from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Interested in volunteering your time? Please contact the Curator of Education at 330-743-2589.



## MISSION STATEMENT

### The Mahoning Valley Historical Society

celebrates the history of the people of the Mahoning Valley.

### *Historical Happenings*

is published bi-monthly by the Mahoning Valley Historical Society. It is sent as a free benefit of MVHS membership. 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.



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## Upcoming Events

- Thursday, September 10 Founders Day Dinner** 5:30 to 8:00 p.m.  
McMahon Hall, Mill Creek MetroParks Farm  
Guest Speaker: Mark Peyko
- Sunday, September 13 Founders Day Open House** 1:00 to 5:00 p.m.  
**Free!** ... Public Open House of the Arms Family Museum ... Walking Tours along Wick Avenue ...  
Opening of the *Mahoning Valley Collects* Exhibit
- Friday, October 30 *Halloween Party***  
Sponsored by YLAB at the historic Harry Burt Bldg. downtown Youngstown. Invitations to follow.

## From the Ground(s) Up

Anthony Worrellia, Buildings and Grounds

Fresh paint, manicured ivy, flats of annuals (donated by Lutz Greenhouse) and 10 yards of mulch later, the grounds at the Arms Family Museum are looking their best. Our thanks to summer grounds intern **Stuart Richardson**, a junior at YSU majoring in Accounting, and help from the Mahoning Columbiana Training Association stimulus work program.



**Grounds Department needs:** Monetary donations welcomed for seasonal Fall plants (mums, kale & grasses) for the beds and planters. If any member is willing to donate a new or used, but working, **snowblower** for this coming winter it would be greatly appreciated. Please call Anthony @ 330-743-2589.

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