

## HISTORICAL HAPPENINGS



PRESERVING THE VALLEY'S HISTORY FOR 134 YEARS

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## Turning the Page: 100 Years of the Main Library

In 1853, the General Assembly of Ohio passed a law by which the state purchased books and supplied them to every school district in Ohio. In 1870, two Youngstown school teachers, Miss Sarah E. Pearson and Miss Julia A. Hitchcock took charge of the 168 volumes of the "Ohio School Library," these books being kept in a case in the superintendent's office at the old Wood Street School.

The school Superintendent, Reuben McMillan, took a deep interest in the library. Under his guidance, Miss Pearson and Miss Hitchcock worked together to provide good books for the growing population. In 1878 the informal association moved the library to the Board of Education rooms in the First National Bank Building and opened its books to the public. Two years later, October 27, 1880, the Youngstown Library Association was incorporated.

Early in 1897, Robert McCurdy, President of First National Bank, and others agreed to purchase the Richard Brown property at Front and Market streets, and present it to the library. The only condition was that the name of the Youngstown Library Association be changed to "Reuben McMillan Free Library Association" as an honor to McMillan's years of service to the Youngstown School System and to the development of the public library system.

On November 20, 1907, the library board authorized the purchase of the W.S. Bonnell property at Wick and Rayen avenues and began planning for a new facility. Designed by local architect Charles F. Owsley, the cornerstone of the new building was laid on June 26, 1909, and opened on December 3, 1910.



### *History to Go!*

**Turning the Page:  
100 Years of the  
Main Library**

**Thursday, May 13th**

6:30 to 8:00 p.m.

Main Branch

305 Wick Avenue,

Youngstown

The story continues at the next *History to Go* program on Thursday May 13th at the Main Branch of the Public Library. Join Historical Society Executive Director Bill Lawson, Library Executive Director Carlton Sears, and architect Frank Rulli for a panel discussion on the library's history, and how it related to the city's development in the early 1900's; the significance of the building's architecture; and what is in store for the Public Library Association in the future.

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Mahoning Valley Historical Society's  
135th Annual Meeting

Tuesday, June 15, 2010

5:30 to 8:30 p.m.

**Holy Trinity  
Romanian Orthodox Church**

\$30 for MVHS members

\$35 for Guests

The evening will include

- The Historic Preservation Awards Program
- Displays from the Historical Society's Programs & Collections
- More updates on the Mahoning Valley History Center

*Watch for your invitation!*



April 15 was a red letter day for the Historical Society as Board President Dave Sabine, Campaign Chair Charlotte Gelhaar, Executive Director Bill Lawson, and Campaign Director, Carol Potter welcomed the Senate Leadership team to Youngstown for a tour of the new History Center. Our senatorial guests included President of the Senate Bill Harris, President Pro Tempore Tom Niehaus, Majority Whip Steve Buehrer, Majority Floor Leader Keith Faber, and Chair of the Finance and Financial Institutions Committee John Carey. Bill Lawson presented the project and explained the plans to restore and adaptively reuse the landmark building. The Senators were most impressed by the scope and merits of the Historical Society's mission and its significant investment in urban revitalization. And, they all had a Good Humor bar!

A reception followed where additional Board members shared their enthusiasm for the History Center project. Thanks to all who took the time to make the day a most successful event, especially our Host Committee supporters Charlotte Gelhaar and Buzz Gubany. The Historical Society has submitted a request for \$1M in the current Capital Bill. ✂

## From This Direction

It occurred to this writer recently that the 2010 census will show that Youngstown's population is now less than it was 100 years ago, when the 1910 census counted just over 79,000 people in the City. Even more striking is the fact that Youngstown's population is now roughly 100,000 less than the all-time high of 170,000 recorded in the 1930 census.

These sobering numbers are a critical issue in local planning and public policy formation as was demonstrated in the development of the Youngstown 2010 plan several years ago. All of us who live in the Valley must focus on the fact that there are fewer people using and maintaining an infrastructure that was built for a much larger population in Mahoning and Trumbull Counties.

On Thursday evening, May 13, the Young Leaders Advisory Board will host a program dedicated to an institution that has been an important element of the community's fabric for the past century—the Reuben McMillan Free Library building at Wick and Rayen Avenues in Youngstown. We at the Mahoning Valley Historical Society are pleased to be part of such public discussions that help people to draw connections between our past, present and future. Hopefully many of our members will be at the Main Library and participating in this conversation!

~H. William Lawson



[www.facebook.com/mahoninghistory](http://www.facebook.com/mahoninghistory)

## Hands-On History: Dolls in History

Rebecca Whittenberger,  
Curator of Education

On display in the current *Mahoning Valley Collects* exhibit is an original set of Dionne quintuplet dolls circa 1937, part of an international doll collection donated by Martha Brenner. These dolls are representations of the real-life Dionne sisters, the first surviving set of quintuplets in history, and the only set of five identical girls ever recorded.



Born on May 28, 1934 in Corbeil, Ontario, Canada, the quintuplets (Annette, Yvonne, Emilie, Cecile and Marie) were two months premature, but with their doctor's help they miraculously survived. The quintuplets' parents, Oliva and Elzire, already had five children and were a poor farming family with limited resources. Stating that they wanted to protect the health of the quints, the Ontario government removed the babies from their home and placed them in a specially built hospital facility across the road.

For the next nine years, the quintuplets were one of the biggest tourist attractions in Canada and the U.S., rivaling Niagara Falls in popularity. As many as 6,000 visitors a day came to watch the quintuplets play in their playground. Nearby souvenir stands, run by their father, completed the compound that became known as "Quintland." Between 1934 and 1943, approximately 3 million tourists visited Quintland; the sisters were a commercial enterprise that generated almost half a billion dollars in revenue for Ontario and local businesses.

Reunited with their family in 1943 after a difficult custody battle, the quintuplets' relationship with their family was a troubled one as they struggled to lead normal lives. The quintuplets left home at the age of 18 and cut off almost all contact with their family. Annette and Cecile are the only surviving quintuplets.

***Mahoning Valley Collects is currently on display in the museum!*** ✂

## Cruising through Youngstown's Automotive History



Ambrose Perkins in his Youngstown built *Freedonia*, c. 1905

Local vehicle collectors, Mr. & Mrs. Richard L. Best, are opening their one-of-a-kind collection of cars, trucks and farm vehicles to attendees of this *History to Go* program. Included in his collection are a Mahoning and a *Freedonia*, both manufactured in Youngstown more than a century ago. This program will also include examining the General Motors operation at Lordstown. A representative from the plant will be in attendance to speak about the company. ✂

### ***History to Go - Save the Date!***

Saturday, June 26th

12:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Additional information will be mailed in June

# Artifact-ually Speaking

Pamela L. Speis, Archivist

Recently an MVHS member came in looking for information on what he had heard of as the “pigeon hole parking” in downtown Youngstown, near the McKelveys store on West Federal Street. A search of the city directories under that name netted no results.

Checking the Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps dating from 1928-1957 provided an answer. The company was actually known as the Youngstown Terminal Parking Company, located at 230 West Commerce Street, across from the back of G. M. McKelvey & Co. and the Bus Arcade. The parking company predates that location and was formally incorporated in 1948, operating parking at 242 and 327 West Commerce and at 109 West Wood, with offices at 203 Terminal Building in downtown.

The 1955-1956 city directory is the first listing for the 230 West Commerce address. The Youngstown Terminal Parking Company remained in existence until at least 1971 with Robert Patterson serving first as manager and then as president of the company.



View of the Pigeon Hole Parking from Wood Street, 1961.

The parking structure located at 230 West Commerce was actually four separate 6-deck structures, with two hoists located between the separate buildings. Each hoist served two of the decks. According to oral history, the hoists were used to raise “cages” containing the customer’s car to a slot. Upon return, each customer would give the office their claim ticket and their car would be retrieved, again using the hoist.

A Vindicator clipping dated July 4, 1969 attributes the “Pigeon Hole” parking deck to the G. M. McKelvey Company in 1953. Another clipping dated March 2, 1965 announced that Joseph Bucheit and Sons Construction Company was awarded the contract to build the G. M. McKelvey Company Parkade on the site of the old Bus Arcade and the J.C. Penney Building at 245 West Commerce. According to the city directories available, these resulting parking structures located at 230 and 245 West Commerce became collectively known as McKelvey’s Parkade in 1973. The name changed to Higbee’s Parkade in the 1975 directory. By the 1987 directory, #230 West Commerce street was no longer listed as a viable address. By then this unique parking solution had been razed leaving only a vacant lot. ✂



Entrance to the Pigeon Hole Parking complex on Commerce Street, 1961. This site is now occupied by the Youngstown Historical Center of Industry and Labor (Steel Museum).

## Sight & Sound

Business & Media Archives of the Mahoning Valley



The Business & Media Archives holds a unique collection of Armed Forces Radio Service disks received from a crewmember of the U.S.S. Rankin (an *Attack Cargo Ship* in service from 1944-1971). Although a bit out of the collection area, the disks came via the U.S.S. Rankin group [www.ussrankin.org](http://www.ussrankin.org), a group of veterans who wanted to reunite with former shipmates and others associated with their ship. One of those members was Kurt S. Kochler who was on board the ship from February 1945 till June of 1946. It was during this time that he came across the nearly 30 disks.

In late 2007 another member of the U.S.S. Rankin group, Lou Sander, found that the Business & Media Archives was purchasing a transcription disk player. The nearly 30 disks that Mr. Sander brought to transfer to CD were created by the Armed Forces Radio Service during World War II. Hollywood stars would donate their time and talents to produce programs that were duplicated to these disks and sent around the world to entertain the troops.

Some of the records are specifically Christmas or New Years music, but some are of more universal appeal such as dance or romantic music and one has the evocative title of “Personal Album”, made by one artist especially for the lonely sailor or soldier away from home. Visit [mahoninghistory.org](http://mahoninghistory.org) for audio samples from the transcription disks. ✂

### From The Digital Deli Online:

The *Armed Forces Radio and Television Service (AFRTS)* Transcription Unit recorded most of the popular commercial programs of the era and shipped them overseas to military transmission facilities for rebroadcast.

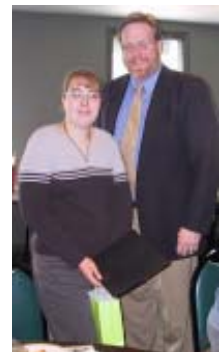
The transcribed programs were recorded primarily on unbreakable, 16-inch vinyl discs, each containing approximately 30 minutes of programming, 15 minutes to a side. At the height of its production, The AFRTS shipped an average of just over 50,000 of these discs overseas each month, with an additional 20,000 discs sent to Navy vessels monthly.

## Volunteer Vitality

On April 22, 2010, the Mahoning Valley Historical Society said “thankyou” to our hard working volunteers.

The Dorothy J. Honey Volunteer of the Year Award, established in 2003, went to Cortney Parsons. Cortney came to MVHS as a graduate student in library and information sciences at Kent State University. She completed a practicum for her degree, and when finished stayed as a volunteer. She has been cataloging like crazy and processed a very large (and messy) collection of court records.

Our thanks also go to these dedicated volunteers that have worked with MVHS over the past year: Samantha Basile, Kay Constantino, Michelle Fitch, Ester Hallaman, Lynette Host, Silke Grothe, Mike McCleery, Paula McKinney, Richard Mitchell, Joseph D. Palen, Cortney Parsons, Priscilla Sutton, Karen Velez and Amany Youssef. ✂



Cortney Parsons with Executive Director Bill Lawson

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



## History Day Projects Receive Awards

The Historical Society participated in Regional History Day at Youngstown State University on March 27th. This year's theme was *Innovation in History*. Awards were presented to projects that focused on a topic in local history. This year's award winners were: Hallie Yerian, Beth Zeno, Carly Berlon, and Alia Yossef for their project *Warner Brothers* (this project was also selected to go on to the state History Day competition in Columbus); and Rachael Hilderbrand, Ashli Vinkler, and Catherine Evan for their project *Steel Mills: Innovating Our Nation*. 🌟

## Upcoming Events

Saturday May 8	<i>Making Memories: Photography of John D. Megown</i> Exhibit Opening at The Arms Family Museum	
Thursday May 13	<i>History to Go</i> <b>Turning the Page: 100 Years of the Main Library</b> Main Branch, 305 Wick Avenue, Youngstown	6:30-8:00 p.m.
Tuesday, June 15	<b>135th Annual Meeting</b> Holy Trinity Romanian Orthodox Church	5:30-8:30 p.m.
Saturday, June 26	<i>History to Go 1</i> <b>Cruising through Youngstown's Automotive History</b>	12:00-4:00 p.m.
July 6-9	<b>Summer Camp Program</b> High Tech History (ages 8-10)	9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.
August 11-13	<b>Summer Camp Program</b> High Tech History (ages 11-13)	9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

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