

# The Mahoning Valley Historical Society Newsletter

## HISTORICAL HAPPENINGS



PRESERVING THE VALLEY'S HISTORY FOR 133 YEARS

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## "You Are Cordially Invited..."

### Examining The Third Floor at Burt's

The third floor at Burt's confectionery housed the chocolate candy factory, the bakery and what Burt called "the modern kitchen." The facility has four rooms in front of the staircase for the factory which were all filled with natural light from wall windows and skylights. Two smaller rooms occupy the mezzanine level. The 1922 Souvenir booklet can best explain the unique aspects of "The Factory":

#### The Factory

*We want to impress this fact; every part of our factory is open at all times in working hours for inspection by the public. Among ourselves we think it is the most interesting part of our establishment. To follow through, step by step, the making of Candies, Ice Cream, Baked Goods and to see the preparation of tasty menus in our modern Kitchens is interesting to everyone.*

*To see how scientific methods are combined with ideal sanitary conditions in confection factory processes is really educative. You and your friends are cordially invited to "go through the factory" at any time.*

#### Burt's Famous Chocolates



Chocolate Dipping Room

*You can walk through glass enclosed aisles in our factory and observe every step in chocolate making without disturbing in any way. You are cordially invited to do so.*



Chocolate Packing Room

*Every piece is dipped by hand. Thus, the making of chocolate confections in our shop has become almost a guild art - each operator is carefully trained in the art of candy making and is personally [sic] held responsible.*



The Modern Kitchens

#### The Ross Radio Era

Like the second floor, the third floor was used for storage after 1935, and retains almost all of the original interior details from Harry Burt's 1922 remodeling.



Harry Burt/Ross Radio Building Third Floor  
Hallway lined with windows for the public to watch the candy making process.

#### The Famous Burt Bakery & Modern Kitchens

*Burt's "Homestyle" Baked Goods are made now in a bake shop ideally equipped to not only maintain the high standards we require in these foods, but also to produce them in quantity more nearly equal to the demand. Cakes, Pies, Patty Shells, French Pastry, Sandwich Bread, Nut Bread, Boston Brown Breads, Rolls, etc., of exceptional goodness are produced here in the most modern and sanitary bake shop in Ohio.*



The Famous Burt Bakery

*In this kitchen is prepared our regular noon-day luncheon, served from 11:30 to 2 in the Wistaria Tea Cottage, as well as the special dinners, afternoon tea lunches and banquets for private parties.*

## All is Merry & Bright Holiday Decorations

December 6th-January 4th @ The Arms Family Museum

Stroll through the museum period rooms to view an evolution of the Christmas tree including traditions in Arts & Crafts, Victorian, 1950's and more!

Four Decorated Trees • Vintage Toys & Ornaments  
Greens & Fresh Flowers

### Free Holiday Open House

Saturday, December 6th  
1:00 to 5:00 p.m.  
Crafts & Refreshments  
Museum Shop Specials

### Preview Party

Friday, December 5th  
5:00 to 7:00 p.m.  
\$18 MVHS Members ~ \$23 Guests  
RSVP by November 28th



*The Campaign for the Mahoning Valley History Center* began with three very successful public events. The first two centered on the Historical Society's *Founders Day* celebration with a members tour of the Harry Burt/Ross Radio Building and a family fun festival in September which brought over 450 people through the building.. In October the campaign hosted a tailgate party at the Youngstown State University homecoming football game where volunteers passed out materials and hotdogs to hundreds of fans. The project planning is moving along through the design phase, and construction is anticipated to begin a year from now. ✨



Over 350 people enjoyed the open house on September 14th

## From This Direction

**Q:** What do you call an edition of the newsletter *Historical Happenings* that contains so much information about local history, news of people and events related to the Mahoning Valley Historical Society, and schedules of upcoming events, that the Executive Director has almost no space to make any articulate observations?

**A:** A very interesting and informative publication!

Enjoy the upcoming holiday season, and make our facilities and events part of your celebration, or at least a shopping destination!

~H. William Lawson

## In Memorium: Fred Tod, Jr.

Fred Tod, Jr., a descendent of a pioneer Mahoning Valley family, great-grandson of Ohio's Civil War Governor, David Tod, and a former trustee and Vice President of the Mahoning Valley Historical Society, passed away on September 3 of this year. Fred Tod was the last surviving member of the Board of Trustees who were present at the meeting on March 30, 1961, when the executors of Olive F.A. Arms' estate transferred ownership of her residence property at 648 Wick Avenue in Youngstown to the Historical Society to create the Arms Museum—now known as the Arms Family Museum of Local History.

Mr. Tod had a distinguished career as co-owner of the Bruce Insurance Agency, and as a trustee, officer and director of several local businesses and non-profit organizations. He also maintained a keen interest in the historical development of the Mahoning Valley and his family's role in the same.

## Get your Hands-On: Holiday Traditions

Rebecca Whittenberger, Curator of Education



McKelvey's on West Federal Street, Downtown Youngstown

It's easy to get nostalgic when thinking about the Holiday season in Youngstown. Many have childhood memories of the city, particularly the local downtown department stores' holiday window displays. In his book *Rose Street*, a family memoir about an Italian family living on the East Side of

Youngstown in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Carmen J. Leone reminisces: "Youngstown's two big department stores were Strouss-Hirshberg and the G. M. McKelvey Company, both locally founded and owned... The children especially looked forward to the season at these two stores. Each tried to outdo the other with its window displays, the great mechanical Santa Clauses and the reindeer and elves, surrounded by wonderful toys, always out of the family's price range. Inside, Strouss's was more fun, because the kids got to ride the magic stairs, escalators, down to the basement for a frosted malted."

Department stores, though beautifully decorated, weren't the only places that celebrated the holiday spirit. Local settlement houses, would assemble a beautiful selection of toys to be given as presents to less fortunate children in the community. Wooden sleds, dolls, candy and nuts, were characteristic gifts during this era, circa 1920s. The Christmas tree, though simply decorated, would have been beautiful to every child who received a gift.



From the International Institute Collection Settlement house at Christmas

Christmas decorations have changed greatly over the years. From the early feather and wrapped Christmas trees, to the highly decorated trees of the Victorian era, to the "white" trees of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the progression of Christmas tree decorations over the years is a fascinating part of our holiday history. One special tradition during the Victorian era was the hanging of a pickle on the tree the night before Christmas. Whichever child was the first to find the pickle on Christmas morning would receive a special surprise!

Many of these Christmas decorations will be on display at the Arms Family Museum during the month of December. Come and enjoy the nostalgia of our Christmas toy collections, one-of-a-kind decorations, and a historical progression of Christmas trees. Make visiting the Arms Family Museum part of your family's yearly Christmas traditions. ✨

## Greystone Gifts

Visit Greystone Gifts this holiday season for unique items related to the history of the Mahoning Valley! Historic photographs, DVD documentaries and several new books on local history are available. New this year are Christmas postcards duplicated from historic cards in the MVHS collections; books on Austintown, Sebring, The Packard Motor Car Company, and Struthers; and traditional ornaments including the Christmas Pickle and the Legend of the Candy Cane.

Present this coupon for



20% Off  
Any One Item

Greystone Gifts

Valid 11.28.08 to 12.31.08



ca. 1935

Send some Holiday cheer with these vintage postcards

# Artifact-ually Speaking

Jessica D. Trickett, Anne Kilcawley Christman  
Memorial Collections Manager

The Christmas tree is the quintessential symbol of this holiday celebration in the United States. But the evergreen tree decorated with lights and ornaments was not always an integral part of the Christmas tradition. It was in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century that the first references to Christmas trees were recorded in cities of the Baltic region of Northern Europe. There, evergreen trees decorated with roses were placed in the marketplaces on Christmas Eve. However, Germany is where the Christmas tree tradition grew into the custom that defines the modern Christmas celebration.



German "Dresden" embossed cardboard ornament, late 19<sup>th</sup> Century



Glow-in-the-dark ornaments, ca. 1950s

The Christmas tree tradition was brought to America with German immigrants in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. Still, Christmas trees were not a popular staple of American celebrations until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century. These early trees were decorated with homemade items such as popcorn strings, nuts, fruits, and colored-paper ornaments as well as toys and gifts. The introduction of glass ornaments in the 1870s changed the way trees were decorated, reflecting a shift from homemade to store-bought decorations. Imported German glass and paper ornaments became fashionable in the 1880s and, by the 1890s, the variety and availability of store-bought decorations was extensive. Christmas trees became highly decorated, filled with bright, festive ornaments of all shapes and sizes.



Japanese Santa Claus, ca. 1920s-30s

The Mahoning Valley Historical Society's collection of Christmas decorations includes a variety of ornament styles, from 19<sup>th</sup> Century blown-glass and paper ornaments to 1950s glow-in-the-dark plastic ornaments.



German blown-glass deer, ca. 1920



The ornament collection, as well as holiday postcards, greeting cards, and photographs, will be featured in the exhibit *A Journey to Christmas Past*, at the Arms Family Museum of Local History. ☞

Opening November 28, 2008

# Sight & Sound

Business & Media Archives of the Mahoning Valley

Thomas Alva Edison invented a process of recording and reproducing sound in 1877. While working on improvements to the telegraph and the telephone, Edison figured out a way to record sound on tinfoil-coated cylinders. He created a machine with two needles: one for recording and one for playback. When Edison spoke into the mouthpiece, the sound vibrations of his voice would be indented onto the cylinder by the recording needle. The word phonograph was the trade name for his invention, which he patented later that year.

In May 1889, the first "phonograph parlor" opened in San Francisco. Customers would sit at a desk where they could speak through a tube, and order a selection for one nickel. By the mid-1890s, most American cities had at least one phonograph parlor.

By 1890, record manufacturers had begun using a rudimentary duplication process to mass-produce their product. While the live performers recorded the master phonograph, up to ten tubes led to blank cylinders in other phonographs. Until this development, each record had to be custom-made.

The 1920s saw improved radio technology and radio sales, bringing many phonograph dealers to near financial ruin. With efforts at improved audio fidelity, the big record companies succeeded in keeping business booming through the end of the decade, but record sales plummeted during the Great Depression, with many companies merging or going out of business.



A promotional copy of *The Larry Page Orchestra* songs include Hey Jude, Promises Promises and Little Green Apples.

Booms in record sales returned after World War II as standards changed from albums of 78rpm's (revolutions per minute) to vinyl long play (LPs) records (33rpm), which could contain an entire symphony, and 45rpm's which usually contained one hit popularized on the radio, plus another song on the back or "flip" side.

Through the 1960's and 1970's inexpensive record players and changers became popular as young people bought the rock and roll songs that they heard on the radio. During the 1980's and 1990's the demand diminished as the cassette tape and compact discs (which were portable) became popular. After the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, records became a niche item.

The Business & Media Archives collection has over 20,000 records spanning from the 1930's to the 1990's, including about 900 78rpm recordings, and roughly 10,000 each of 45's and 33's. Since the vast majority of these are still under copyright protection they are not available to copy, but they can be played. In the collection there are also over 3,000 transcription disks, which was the main way that radio stations recorded programs. Some of these were produced locally, and are available for reproduction.

During the holiday season at the Arms Family Museum, several types of music will be featured with the decorations. Music from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century will be provided with help from WYSU, and music from the 1950's will come from the Business & Media Archives collection. ☞

## 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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## 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.

Leann Rich, Editor



## Upcoming Events

<b>Exhibit Opening</b> <i>A Journey to Christmas Past</i>	Friday, November 28th	1:00 to 5:00 p.m.
<b>Holiday Open House</b> <i>Preview Party</i>	Friday, December 5th	5:00 to 7:00 p.m.
<b>Holiday Open House</b> <i>Free Admission!</i>	Saturday, December 6th	1:00 to 5:00 p.m.
<b>Holiday Decorations</b>	December 6th-January 4th	Tours Daily
<b>First Night Youngstown</b> <i>Entertainment &amp; Tours at the Arms Family Museum of Local History and The Harry Burt/Ross Radio Building</i>	Wednesday, December 31st	6:00 to 9:00 p.m.

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## 2009 Calendars



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