

New Albany-Plain Township Historical Society

NEWSLETTER

October – December 2023

VIETNAM FIGHTER PILOT



At our September 14th meeting, Retired U.S. Navy Commander Roger Kisiel shared stories from his years in the U.S. Navy as a fighter pilot. Roger first attended the U.S. Naval Academy from 1958-1962, where he was the captain of the 1962 National Championship Lacrosse Team in which he was an All-American. During the Vietnam War, he flew with Attack Squadron 36 for three years and in 1967 and 1968 he was a test pilot at the U.S. Navy Test Pilot School.



Top left: Ready Room Squadron Duty Officer

Bottom left: Entering A4 Skyhawk

Above: with son, NAPTHS Secretary Chandler Kisiel

Below: Officer of the Deck Duty



*** * * UPCOMING EVENTS * * ***



HALLOWEEN OPEN HOUSE

OCTOBER 22 -- 1:00 - 6:00 p.m.

Ealy House, 6359 Dublin-Granville Road, New Albany
Vintage Decoration Display
Free Hot Dogs, Snacks, and Drinks
Candy for the Kids
PIG BEAR Stories

BOARD MEETING

NOVEMBER 2 -- 6:30 p.m.

Franklin Church, 7171 Central College Road, New Albany
The Year Ahead – Planning Events for 2024
Society members are encouraged to attend
or contact a Board member with ideas



HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE

DECEMBER 10 -- 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Ealy House, 6359 Dublin-Granville Road, New Albany

HOLIDAY DINNER BUFFET

DECEMBER 14 -- 6:15 p.m.

New Albany Methodist Church, 20 Third Street, New Albany

Salad, Baked Spaghetti, Meatballs, and Garlic Bread catered by Eagles Pizza, followed by Dessert

RESERVATIONS @ \$10.00 PER PERSON DUE BY DECEMBER 5

Mail check, made payable to NAPTHS, to Helen Pestel,
8355 New Albany Condit Road, Westerville, OH 43081-9702

Check www.newalbanyhistory.info
for updates

Notice of meetings and
cancellations will be sent by email

BOARD MEETINGS

OCTOBER 5

NOVEMBER 2

DECEMBER 7

FEBRUARY 1

**6:30 p.m. at Franklin Church,
7171 Central College Rd, NA**

If bad weather, meeting will be held via zoom

ANOTHER NEWSLETTER

by Dennis Keesee

Today, whatever day it may be, is the day you received another newsletter from the New Albany-Plain Township Historical Society. The first newsletter was published in July 1987, 36 years ago. The front cover was graced with a poor-quality image of the Archibald Smith House on Kitzmiller Road. Within the eight pages were minutes of the previous meeting including the treasurer's report (we had \$7,649.68 in total), news, announcements, and a few stories of interest.

John Saveson had just been elected president of the group at the June 11, 1987, meeting and was recorded in the minutes as saying that he had enjoyed researching the history of the area. He felt that the Historical Society had an influence on the community, and he sensed a friendly atmosphere at Founders Day this year. By the way, later in the newsletter it was noted that Cecil Walton had estimated 2,000 to 3,000 people attended Founders Day.

Seventeen attended the Society's June potluck that year and Arloia Walton pointed out three members of the group had been featured in articles in the *Dispatch*: Jean Barnes, outdoor cooking; Rudy Sever, Building a log cabin with his class; Willard and Patty Zarley with their strawberry patch.

When reading the first newsletter of July 1987, I was taken back in time by the last-page story, which is reprinted below.

PLAIN TALES FROM PLAIN TOWNSHIP

[Any resemblance to persons living or dead is intentional.]

I was down at Hank's house not long ago, and he told me this story about Cecil Thatcher and the bears.

"Cecil Thatcher," Hank said, "went to Canada with another fella he knew to hunt or fish or pick blackberries. I don't rightly know what they did. Anyway, when they were out in the woods there, they spotted two bear cubs up in a tree.

"Cecil is fond of animals, you know; right away he wanted to take them bear cubs home with him. So he climbed up the tree to git 'em.

"Anybody could predict what happened next. The mama bear climbed right up behind him.

"Well, Cecil's friend saw the predicament Cecil was in, and to save Cecil, he shot the mama bear.

"Cecil put them bear cubs under a blanket in the back seat so nobody could see them. There's a law against bringing bear cubs over the Canadian border. When they got home, Cecil took one cub to raise and his friend took the other.

"Them bear cubs grew, of course," Hank said.

"They sure did," Hank's wife said. She was doing the dishes out in the kitchen. "People driving by Cecil's house slammed on their brakes and stared when they saw Miz Thatcher go through the garden followed by a four-hundred-pound bear."

"Eventually," Hank said, "the bears got mean. Both men had to keep them in cages.

"One day when Cecil's friend came home from work, he saw his little boy's coat in the cage. The fella got real frantic cause he thought the bear ate his kid.

"He ran all around the neighborhood, and when he couldn't find his kid, he came back and got his gun out of his house and ran out and shot the bear."

"He shot the bear cause he thought it ate his kid.

"But it didn't. The kid was at a friend's house and came home later."

"Lord love us," Hank's wife said from the kitchen. "Everybody knows bears don't eat people. They just eat bugs and honey."

Now all of us youngsters who lived in New Albany during the 60s and 70s knew the story of Cecil Thatcher and the bear cubs. Cecil's friend was Merle Piper who lived down the road from me on Central College Road. The little boy was my good friend and classmate Terry Piper. Merle was a giant of a man with a big attention-grabbing voice. As a local plumber, Merle was known by everyone in the area. Merle and his little cub were best friends. He would take it all over central Ohio and wrestle that bear in public, sometimes charging a small fee but mostly for show. I had not thought about that bear in a long time. My dad used to talk about it and Merle would laugh so loud you could have heard him in Columbus. It is true that the bear was shot but I do not recall it being because of Terry's coat. It is true that it did get mean and big and I think Merle just knew it was best to get rid of it before it did hurt his little boy whom he was always so proud of.

Our Society newsletters have saved hundreds of stories about the people who lived long before us or were our friends not many years ago. To everyone who has had a hand in putting out the newsletters over the last 30 odd years as Betty Maynard and Marty Saveson have done since I have been President, I salute you. I am one person who always loved getting the newsletters. I think I have saved about every issue ever printed. I will continue to share articles from the past in upcoming newsletters because many of you today were not here then. P.S. Wait until you hear the story of Cecil's deer. An unbelievable story!

INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATION



Above: Robert and Debbie Dean representing the Historical Society in New Albany's July 4th parade in their 1967 King Midget
Left: Open House docents Helen Pestel, Catherine Saveson, and Doug Tracy with King Midget in front of the Ealy House

OUTING TO COLUMBUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

On July 13, Helen Pestel, Dave Maynard, and Betty Maynard were introduced to *The Art of Edoardo Alfieri* by CHS President Mike Frush, Vice President Jack Benjamin, and Trustee Doug Tracy (at right) at the Columbus Historical Society. Edoardo Alfieri is best known in Columbus as the creator of the 1955 Christopher Columbus statue that was presented as a gift from Genoa, Italy, to Columbus, Ohio, and stood at Columbus City Hall. This exhibit featured 59 pieces by Alfieri including 19 original sculptures and reliefs, one of which was the original plaster model for the Christopher Columbus statue, and 40 original drawings.



EIGHTH GRADERS TOUR THE EALY HOUSE

by Valerie Bevelhymer

On August 21, 22, and 30, docents at the Ealy House welcomed over 400 eighth-grade students from the New Albany Middle School for fall tours. Touring the Ealy House, an 1860's era home, helps students develop a sense of local history and supports the Social Studies curriculum. Valerie Bevelhymer, Nichole Foreman, Dennis Keesee, Beckie Knore, Helen Pestel, and Doug Tracy conducted tours. The high point for students this year was the story of the "lost dime and the death of Ross Doran" as told by Dennis Keesee. The New Albany Chamber of Commerce provided light-up bracelets for each of the eighth graders.



ANNUAL POTLUCK PICNIC

Twenty-seven of us enjoyed scrumptious food and wonderful company in the big old Saveson barn at the end of Clouse Road on August 12, with guests from as far away as the Philippines. Marilyn Regrut (pictured at right as a docent for the first-grade tours on November 1 and 2, 2022) was honored for her many years of service to the Society. She was presented a certificate signed by President Dennis Keesee and Secretary Chandler Kisiel, flowers, and candy. We celebrated Marty Saveson's birthday of the previous Sunday with a delicious, decorated cake and by singing Happy Birthday to Marty (at far right) and all the August birthday attendees.



(L to R) Standing: Mark Baranoski, Emily Eby, Beckie Knore, Frank Knore, Helen Pestel, Steve Bevelhymmer, Mike Lahmann, Keith Moody, Neil Kirby, Marilyn Regrut, Debbie Tracy, Phoebe Lahmann. Seated: (Top Row) Dave Maynard, Betty Maynard, Rick Otten. (Middle Row) Jennifer Tomelap, Aimee Jankura, Barb Dean, Dave Dean, Valerie Bevelhymmer. (Front Row) Doug Brahler, Dennis Keesee, Marty Saveson, Doug Tracy. Not Pictured: Liam Otten, Willow Otten, Catherine Saveson.

YEGGS IN NEW ALBANY

by Doug Tracy

The March 11, 1916, headline in the Marion Star read: "Store Wrecked When Yeggmen Crack Safe. Police Seek Men Who Pull Off Job at New Albany." A band of yeggmen had broken into M. Wilcox's general store in the village of New Albany at about 3 a.m. that morning and attempted to blow the safe. They escaped with nothing after nearly wrecking the entire building by using too much nitroglycerine. The explosion destroyed the inside of the building and blew out all the windows. Bleary-eyed residents who were awakened by the blast reported seeing a large black automobile driving away at the breakneck speed of 60 miles per hour. Gaggles of police and sheriff deputies searched the northeast corridor but found no trace of the yeggs. The Dayton News noted that, "The robbers were probably tyros (beginners) at the business."



So what on earth is a "yeggman?" A safe-blower in those days was known as a "yegg," "peterman" or "cracksman." The origins of the word "yegg" are murky at best. Some historians attribute the name to a notorious early-1900's bank robber named John Yegg. However, no evidence of a safecracker named John Yegg has ever been found. Others speculate that it may have been derived from a similar Scottish word or the German word "jaeger", meaning a wandering criminal. Early 20th century news accounts suggested that hobos riding the rails were responsible for the wave of petty thefts that eventually evolved into more sophisticated safe-blowings.

The Washington Post in 1912 opined that the word "yegg" first showed up in a headline two decades earlier: "The Yeggs appeared after the disbandment of the Coxey Army in 1894." The Coxey Army, made up of thousands of jobless men, was organized by Ohioan Jacob Coxey in 1894 to march on Washington during Grover Cleveland's presidency as a way of bringing more attention and relief to the mass unemployment caused by the panic of 1893. The march started in Massillon, Ohio, and included 6,000 jobless men by the time it reached Washington. The event is recognized as the first significant protest march ever made on Washington. Many think that the Wizard of Oz was actually a fictionalized re-telling of this event, e. g., the Wizard represented President Cleveland, the Scarecrow represented farmers, the Tinman represented industry and so forth.

Yeggmen operated in small gangs or "peter mobs" of 3 to 4 members. The term 'peter' references one of the primary ingredients of gunpowder – saltpeter (potassium nitrate). Yeggs had a language of their own and colorful monikers such as 'The Dago Kid', 'St. Louis Slim', 'Blackie Brown', 'Flim-Flam Taylor', 'The Joker', 'Squibby the Kid', 'Husky Burns' and 'Big George'. The fascinated newspaper readers could not get enough of the sensational safe-blowing stories and newspaper and magazine editors readily obliged by regularly reporting each and every detail of every caper on their front pages.

The science of pulling off a safe-blowing job involved 3 to 4 peter mob members: inside men, outside men and getaway men. The getaway men knew every railroad junction in the state and, as a source told one newspaperman, "A good yeggman won't take a job until he has figured out one of three getaways – hand car, freight train or carriage. Recently one or two mobs, after cracking a safe, have made their getaway successfully in automobiles."

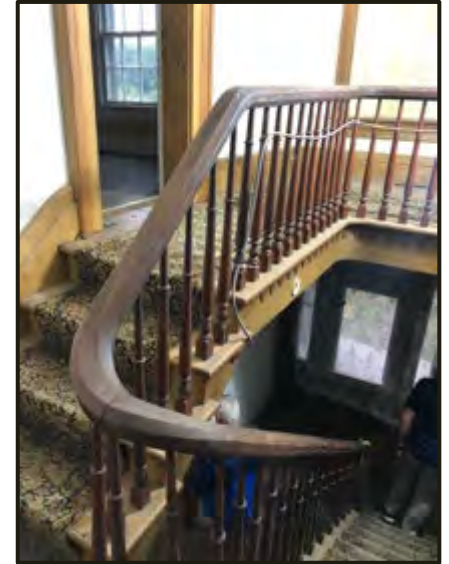
To set up a safe-blowing job, a 'feeler' (scout) first came into town to look over the 'jug' (building), posing as a beggar or trinket seller who strolled in to size up the 'peter' (safe) inside. The nitroglycerine was usually stolen from a magazine in the oil fields and heavy tools often were stolen from a nearby blacksmith shop or hardware store. The armed outside men guarded the entrance and other doors to handle any pedestrians, 'coppers' (police) or 'night hacks' (night watchmen) who might wander by. The inside man filled the cracks of the safe with soap and hammered the bolt just enough to force a space wide enough to insert a small cup of soap. The nitroglycerine was poured into the soap cup, making the 'soup.'

The safe was then covered with a stack of rugs or towels to muffle the sound and the fuse was set. After the blast, if all went according to plan, the door of the safe swung open. If not, a 'jimmy' (crowbar) was used to finish the entry. Daylight safe-blowings in small towns, particularly without a police presence, were not uncommon. There were many instances of townspeople watching from across the street facing armed guards while the yeggmen did their work inside.

The New Albany yeggmen were never identified or caught.

**NEW ALBANY 101:
TAYLOR FARM PARK EVENT**

On October 5, the Historical Society set up a display at the Taylor Park. Pictured below with the warranty deed, artifacts found on the property, and a map are Robert Dean, Dennis Keesee, Helen Pestel, and Doug Tracy. Tours of the 1863 Taylor house were given of which Mayor Sloan Spalding and Dennis Keesee (at right) participated. The staircase from the second floor to the front entrance hall is shown at far right.



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Phoebe and Mike Lahmann

NAPTHS BOARD

PRESIDENT
Dennis Keesee 614-563-5228

VICE PRESIDENT
Vacant

SECRETARY
Chandler Kisiel 614-915-1222

TREASURER
Helen Pestel 614-855-3765

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Beckie Knore 614-855-1950
Doug Tracy 614-361-5308

TRUSTEES
Valerie Bevelhymer 614-619-0555
Robert Dean 614-288-9263
Nichole Foreman 513-240-4654
Betty Maynard 614-855-2543
Catherine Saveson 614-843-9505

NEWSLETTER EDITORS

Betty Maynard & Marty Saveson

SUMMER OPEN HOUSES

The Ealy House was open every Sunday during June, July, and August except on July 2. Many people stopped by for a visit. They included those close to home and within Ohio, some from out of state, and one from Africa. Thank you, volunteers, for greeting the visitors and sharing the Ealy House with them this summer.





New Albany-Plain Township Historical Society
PO Box 219
New Albany OH 43054-0219

(614) 855-9861
www.newalbanyhistory.info

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Grant funds provided by the City



VIETNAM FIGHTER PILOT ROGER KISIEL FLYING A SEAHAWK

OCT – DEC 2023

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