

# New Albany-Plain Township Historical Society October-December 2025 Newsletter



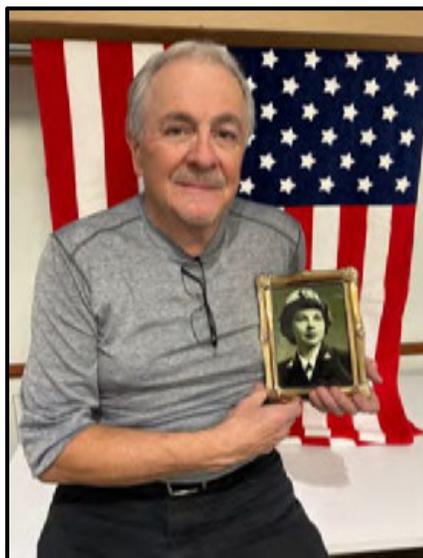
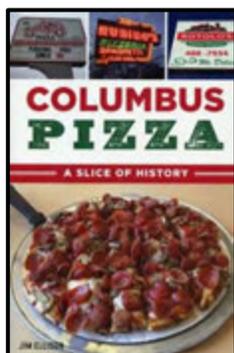
## HALLOWEEN FAMILY DAY October 26, 2025

Halloween Family Day was held at the Ealy House Museum with Halloween and fall decorations throughout. All enjoyed free hot dogs, snacks, and treats, and listening to the legendary story of Pig Bear (see page 4) told by Dennis Keesee. Several people were excited to purchase T-shirts with the image of Pig Bear that was created by Marcy Steckman. Many children were dressed in costumes. Brothers Tanner and Jensen James (left) cuddled up to Pig Bear on one of our new benches. Attendees tried their hand at the Plinko and ring toss games, then received an Ealy House wristband and a Pig Bear sticker. Thank you to the many volunteers who contributed to an enjoyable day!



## COLUMBUS PIZZA HISTORY October 1, 2025

Jim Ellison, author of *Columbus Pizza*, kicked off National Pizza Month by delivering up piping-hot slices of Columbus pizza history. He started his presentation by asking each attendee to talk about their first pizza and favorite pizza today. Jim had the sauce on all our local pizza favorites and surprised us with deep-dish stories about the birth and evolution of pizza in Columbus and how the city was named Pizza Capital of the USA in the 1990s. His presentation was followed by New Albany's own pizza legend, Dennis Keesee, owner of Eagles Pizza, treating us with tasty pizzas (thank you!).



## WINIFRED BREEGLE & THE NAVAJO CODE TALKERS OF WWII November 5, 2025

NAPTHS member David Gerhardt (left) presented the incredible story of Winifred Breegle who served as a cryptographer in the Navy's WAVES from 1944 until 1949. Her exceptional coding and decoding skills, coupled with her groundbreaking work with the Navajo Code Talkers, were essential to the war effort. Thanks to her work, critical information was provided to wartime commanders, military leaders, and the White House to impact the war and bring it to end. Her service helped blaze a trail for future generations of military women.



## HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSES November 23 & 30, 2025

Many visitors enjoyed touring the festively decorated Ealy House. They were greeted on the 23<sup>rd</sup> by sounds of holiday songs played by Catherine Saveson (left with Beckie Knore and Marcy Steckman) on the Crown pump organ. Chandler Kisiel entertained with the violin and Catherine Saveson the guitar (below right) on the 30<sup>th</sup>. Thank you to the volunteer decorators, musicians, and docents!



**\*\*\* UPCOMING EVENTS \*\*\***

# 2026

**HAPPY NEW YEAR PARTY**

**January 7 (Wednesday) -- 6:30 p.m.**

**New Albany Library, 200 Market Street**

Snacks, Drinks, Contests, and Prizes

Don't miss this fun night with fellow Society members!

**HISTORY OF THE U.S. PENNY**

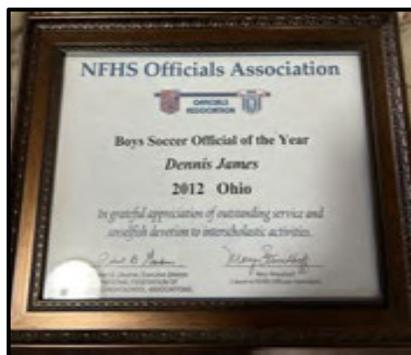
**February 4 (Wednesday) -- 7:00 p.m.**

**New Albany Library, 200 Market Street**

Presentation by NAPTHS President Dennis Keesee

Pictured: Large cent (left), Indian Head cent (right)

Event is free and open to the public.



**HISTORY OF SOCCER IN NEW ALBANY**

**March 4 (Wednesday) -- 7:00 p.m.**

**New Albany Library, 200 Market Street**

In his presentation, NAPTHS Trustee Dennis James will answer: "How did the sport of Soccer get started and develop in and around the New Albany area?"

"How did the James family affect this development?"

Event is free and open to the public.

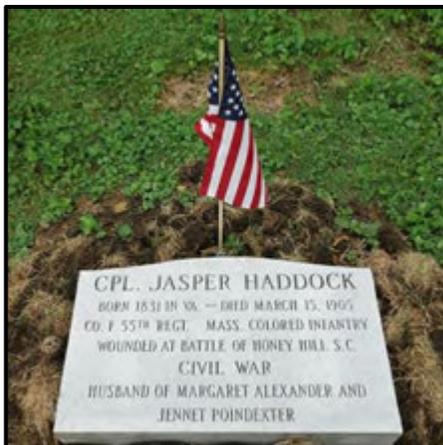
**JASPER HADDOCK,  
BLACK CIVIL WAR VETERAN**

**April 1 (Wednesday) -- 7:00 p.m.**

**New Albany Library, 200 Market Street**

NAPTHS Curator Doug Tracy will present the story of Corporal Jasper Haddock, one of many Ohio African Americans who stepped forward to serve in the 55<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Colored Infantry during the Civil War. It's also the inspiring story of Captina, a once-thriving Ohio community of free Blacks and formerly enslaved persons who courageously found their way across the Ohio River in the early 1800s in search of freedom and an opportunity for a new life.

Event is free and open to the public.



## FIRST GRADERS' TOUR OF EALY HOUSE MUSEUM HIGHLIGHTED BY DIVERSE VOICES OF LOCAL DOCENTS

by Valerie Bevelhmyer

On November 5th and 6th, 2025, nearly 300 excited New Albany first-grade students traveled back in time during school tours of the Ealy House Museum, a lovingly preserved 1860s farm home. For many children, it was their first chance to explore a historical site in person — opening doors to curiosity, connection, and a deeper understanding of how families lived more than 160 years ago.

Students were met by a team of dedicated volunteer docents whose own diverse backgrounds enriched the experience. These volunteers — teachers, retirees, lifelong history enthusiasts, and community members — shared stories that reflected not only the heritage of the Ealy family but also perspectives that shape our community today.

Inside the farmhouse, docents guided students through rooms filled with period furnishings and tools. They described daily chores, from baking bread in a wood-burning stove to tending animals and preparing for Ohio's long winters. Some docents connected these tasks to traditions from their own families or cultural histories, helping students see that while the Ealys lived in a very different time, many aspects of home and family life are shared across cultures.

Children learned how farm work changed with the seasons and how communities in the 1860s depended on cooperation and shared labor. The docent team added personal insights, giving students a fuller picture of the skills early settlers needed to thrive. The blend of factual history and lived experience allowed students to see that history is not just one voice. It is actually a collection of many voices, each contributing something unique and relevant.

Students left with new questions, an appreciation for the past, and a sense of pride in the diverse community that keeps the Ealy House Museum and its stories alive. They also learned about a few old sayings, like: "Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater!"

The November tours showcased what makes local history meaningful: a place where children can touch the past, guided by volunteers whose varied stories help make history feel alive, relevant, and welcoming to all. In addition this year, Nichole Foreman and her daughter, Noelle, provided students with a refreshing taste of apple cider reminiscent of the orchards and cider mill that existed when George and Christina Ealy lived on the farm. Students also received special Ealy House wristbands compliments of the NAPTHS.

Docent volunteers for the tours included: Helen Pestel, Beckie Knore, Stacie Miller, Nichole Foreman, and (pictured left to right) Dennis Keesee, Doug Tracy, Emily Eby, Valerie Bevelhmyer.



## NEW ALBANY'S LEGEND OF THE PIG BEAR

Starting around the late 1930s and continuing through the early 1980s, residents of New Albany and Plain Township encountered an unknown creature that resembled a bear in shape but had a bald snout like a pig. By the 1970s when sightings peaked, local teenagers named it a Pig Bear.

Pig Bear traits are: brown in color except snout; loud shrieking noise; is very fast and quick; runs on two legs and four; climbs trees. It was spotted in northern Plain Township more often than south and was last encountered during the 1980s. Or is it still here? Beware of the Pig Bear!



The NAPTHS believes it is time that New Albany's Pig Bear gets the recognition it deserves amongst American legends. If you wish to join the movement, purchase a Pig Bear shirt at Eagles Pizza @ \$20. All funds support the New Albany-Plain Township Historical Society.

## WINTER MEMORIES



The end of 2025 is near and once again I sit at my computer writing a story for the enjoyment of my Historical Society friends. Today I want to talk about snow, that white stuff that is such a delight for some (left, 2003 Phil Doran) and terrible for a winter commute by others. We are told no two snowflakes are alike, all unique as we are. The same can be said for every winter in Ohio.

I recall that when I was a child in the 1960s, there was snow everywhere and winters stayed cold for nine months of the year. Snowmen were standing so long some got hungry and ate their own carrot noses. In the 1970s it seems there was so much snow we could climb the ladders to the top of the farm silos and ski down the snowdrifts gathered around. I was mistaken of that chatter!

In reality, winter and snow records in Franklin County, Ohio, have been kept for a very long time. Some people call those records statistics but if you add a few stories to the statistics they become history. I do remember wintertime in my youth as a fun and exciting time. When there was a lot of snow, we built snowmen as today's children do and dug snow forts in the drifts. My great grandfather had two friends die when he was building an igloo on the banks of the Ohio River in the 1870s, so our parents would make sure our snow forts were safe.

When checking snow statistics of the 1960s, I see that the biggest snowfall in one day was 8.6 inches on March 5, 1962. I was three at the time so probably do not recall the day very much. In fact, the most snow in any one winter during the 1960s was also in 1962 with 21.8 inches. During the 1960s, our average snowfall was 13.99 inches with the second highest snowfall year being 1965 with 17 inches. It was during the 1970s when I was old enough to appreciate winter and snow a bit more. On February 8, 1971, 8.9 inches fell which helped that year to also have the record snowfall of 22.6 inches. The average for the decade was 13.47 inches or slightly below the average in the 1960s.



How could this be you think, knowing this was the decade of the great blizzard of 1978? Yes, there was a lot of snow that fell during January of 1978 (left), and it is estimated there was a snowpack of 17 plus inches on the ground when the blizzard of January 25-27 started. (Some was left over from the December 1977 snowfall.) Yet only another four plus inches fell during the storm. The then total of 22 inches was so terrible because of drifting snow and bitter cold.

I was working, as always, at Eagles Pizza that winter and my father, Tom Keesee, insisted that we stay open so strangers and snowplow drivers could have a place to warm up. We sold more coffee than pizza that week as I recall. Back then there were quite a few snowmobiles running around. Bob Ranney and son Mike with David Doran traveled the roads to help anyone in need. Big tires on trucks were in fashion, so trucks were coming in and out of New Albany during the entire three days, filled with young people out to see the storm. We were not busy, so we mostly sat at the corner table, waiting to see if a car needed to be pushed up the hill on Route 62.

During the 1980s, the most snowfall occurred on April 4, 1987, when an early spring day brought 12.3 inches of snow to the area. The cold snap reached clear down into Tennessee where I and many others were reenacting the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Battle of Franklin, Tennessee. That was the coldest day of my life as we lay in our Civil War tents with our Civil War uniforms on and only a wool blanket and straw to keep us warm. That night the temperature dropped to minus 30 degrees with the windchill. When we awoke on the 5<sup>th</sup> a history professor from The Ohio State University had frozen to death about 30 feet from our tent. He lay there in his uniform covered with a blanket with his brogan shoes sticking out at one end and his toes pointing upward. It was a surreal scene as soldiers stood all around in shock by the many fires and cooking breakfast. Strangely, by the time I arrived home in New Albany on the 6<sup>th</sup> all the snow had melted. Even with that big snowfall, the 1980s only netted an average snowfall of 11.21 inches.

During the 1990s, 8.8 inches of snow fell on January 7, 1996, and the decade average was 10.72. 1996 had over 22 inches alone equaling one fifth of the total.

Despite what my youthful brain stowed away about those snowy days of long ago (right, 2002 Dennis Keesee and Andy Doran with snowmen), from 2000 through 2010 the actual average snowfall was 18.91 inches in Franklin County, almost five more than in the 1960s. And from 2010 through 2020 our average was 32.11 inches.



Over the years we have had enough snow to keep me happy. Clear Fork Ski Slope near Butler, Ohio, was a favorite place to go but it is long gone like many of the other ski slopes. The problem isn't that there is not enough snow but that there are too many warm days to keep it white. I enjoyed skiing quite a bit in my youth, but my true winter love was ice skating.

Growing up with a pond in our front yard meant lots of ice skating and playing hockey. When I was a teenager, our house was always full of wet clothes and ice skates sitting in piles as many of our Eagles Pizza employees and area youth would come over after work and play hockey under the lights, with tennis balls so no one would get hurt. On other days we had serious games. We would, with the aid of a sump pump, flood the already frozen pond and then squeegee it smooth as if a Zamboni had been used. We would put the word out and all the area skaters would show up. Those without skates were usually put in the goals. On those days we played with hockey pucks and boy did it hurt if one went in the air! On a few occasions the ice would be too thin near where the cattails grew, and someone would get too close and get a cold foot.

This love of skating led me to take private lessons for about three years after graduating from high school. By the time I had moved to a different interest I had achieved triple Toe Loops, Salchows, the famed triple Axel, sit spins, and most other things you witness on television. My biggest regret in life is letting my dad talk me out of skating in Europe with the Ice Capades. He really liked having me cook pizzas. In the long run it was probably the right decision, or I would have moved away years ago and this story would have never been put into print.

See you all in 2026!

Your President, Dennis Keesee



**THANK YOU!**

We are very grateful to the City Council for approving a \$10,000 grant for 2026 for the New Albany-Plain Township Historical Society. The funds will help us maintain the Ealy House and New Albany's Historical Collections. They will also help with costs to hold events and meetings, with great speakers and topics, which are always free and open to the public.

Our organization used the 2025 funds toward the replacement of the Ealy House back porch and ramp; outside benches; and outdoor electrical outlets. The funds also helped with expenses of our Society's multiple programs and events such as program speaker fees, supplies, banners, cleaning service for Ealy House, and Ealy House wristbands.

## **NAPTHS YEAR IN REVIEW – 2025**

Applied for 2026 City of New Albany Grant (July) – Awarded \$10,000

Members Liz Feichter (February) and Norma Massie (May) passed away

Blendon Township Senior Center members toured Ealy House (April 24)

Don Shoemaker donated a Pestel Milk Company wooden crate containing 20 glass bottles

Image of Pig Bear, created by Marcy Steckman, was printed on stickers and T-shirts

Helen Pestel was honored for her many years of service to the Society, especially as Treasurer from which position she retired on October 31 after serving for 22 years

Terms of Board members commenced on November 1 for:

Reelected President Dennis Keesee, Secretary Chandler Kisiel, and Trustees Nichole Foreman and Catherine Saveson

Newly elected Vice President Marcy Steckman and Treasurer Betty Maynard

Seven persons joined our Society in 2025

Statue committee continued raising funds for New Albany Vietnam Veterans Memorial

### **NEW ALBANY SCHOOL TOURS OF THE EALY HOUSE MUSEUM:**

8<sup>th</sup> Grade (438 students – September 3, 4, & 5)

1<sup>st</sup> Grade (nearly 300 students – November 5 & 6)

### **PROGRAMS:**

"The Vietnam War and How Music Influenced Youth, Politics, and Military Strategy" by David Gerhardt (February 5)

"Times, Crimes and the Tenderloin in Pre-Prohibition Toledo" by Doug Tracy (March 5)

"Honor Flight Columbus" by Angel First Class Terri Higgins (May 7)

"Walking Tour of Historic New Albany" led by Dennis Keesee (September 3)

"Columbus Pizza History" by Jim Ellison (October 1)

"Winifred Breegle & The Navajo Code Talkers of WWII" by David Gerhardt (November 5)

### **EVENTS:**

Happy New Year Party (January 8)

New Albany History Day with heritage quilt display at New Albany Library (April 26)

Founders Day Parade with Robert Dean driving his 1963 Studebaker Champ truck decorated with NAPTHS 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary banners and members dressed in period costume riding in back (May 17)

Historical Society 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Party (June 4)

Independence Day Parade with Eagles Pizza and the Historical Society jointly honoring the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Vietnam War – Veterans Dave Halsey and Dave Gerhardt riding on a float displaying the New Albany Vietnam Veterans Memorial mockup (July 4)

Society Potluck at the Saveson barn (August 16)

Summer Open Houses at Ealy House every Sunday during June, July, and August (except July 6)

Halloween Family Day with Pig Bear stories (October 26)

Holiday Open Houses (November 23 & 30)

Holiday Dinner at New Albany Library (December 3)



**HOLIDAY DINNER  
December 3, 2025**

Our holiday gathering at the New Albany Library was enjoyed by 45 persons. A delicious baked spaghetti dinner buffet was provided by Eagles Pizza (thank you!), followed by cookies for dessert. Dinner was free; however, donations to support the New Albany-Plain Township Historical Society were very much appreciated.

New members and first-time attendees were introduced, then told a little bit about themselves. Betty Maynard read the NAPTHS Year in Review – 2025. After Richard Whitelock (top left with daughter Kenna Zeppernick) shared a Christmas story, he rang the bells and spoke about his fond memories of Bill Resch. A singalong was accompanied by the Society’s very talented members (top right) – Rick Otten (banjo), Catherine Saveson (guitar), and Chandler Kisiel (violin). To end the evening, some folks shared their special Christmas memories.

***NAPTHS BOARD***

- PRESIDENT  
Dennis Keesee                    614-563-5228
  
- VICE PRESIDENT  
Marcy Steckman                614-230-8179
  
- SECRETARY  
Chandler Kisiel                    614-915-1222
  
- TREASURER  
Betty Maynard                    614-596-5035
  
- CO-CURATORS  
Beckie Knore                    614-855-1950  
Doug Tracy                        614-361-5308
  
- TRUSTEES  
Valerie Bevelhymmer        614-619-0555  
Robert Dean                    614-288-9263  
Nichole Foreman                513-240-4654  
Dennis James                    614-563-8376  
Catherine Saveson            614-843-9505

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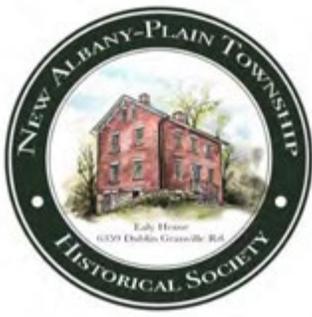
***NEWSLETTER EDITORS***

Betty Maynard & Marty Saveson



**DONATION**

Thank you to member Don Shoemaker for donating a Pestel Milk Company wooden crate containing 20 glass bottles.



New Albany-Plain Township Historical Society  
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(614) 855-9861  
[www.newalbanyhistory.info](http://www.newalbanyhistory.info)

## RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Grant funds provided by the City



## HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM PIG BEAR AND FRIENDS!

### OCT - DEC 2025

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