



Champaign County Historical Society and Museum
Est. 1934

Sept/Oct 2023

CHAMPAIGN CHRONICLES

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Oktoberfest is coming! This is our biggest event of the year! Our volunteers work extremely hard to ensure that this is a must attend event every year. We have several new vendors and new entertainment in addition to our old favorites. We look forward to seeing you there!

This summer was a busy one. We hosted several groups including, the Urbana Chapter of the Daughter of the American Revolution, United Senior Services from Springfield, Girl Scout troops from Champaign and Logan Counties, as well as hosting several other programs. This fall things are not slowing down. Keep an eye on the newsletter and the website for our upcoming events and programs. If you have a group that would be interested in touring the museum please contact us at the Champaign County Historical Society, by phone at 937-653-6721, or by email at champaigncohistory@gmail.com

We hope to see you soon!

Cheryl Ogden
Museum Director

If you would like to receive communications from the Historical Society electronically please send us an email to champaigncohistory@gmail.com. Let us know if you would like to receive your renewal notice, and/or the newsletter via email.

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**Banner Photo of John Quincy Adams
Ward Birthplace, draped in red, white,
and blue.*

51st ANNUAL OKTOBERFEST



The 2022 Oktoberfest had record crowds (1900 guests) and the committee is working to make the 2023 Oktoberfest even larger! Celebrating our 51st Year, the Oktoberfest on Oct. 1, promises a day of fun for the entire family! The museum will be open to explore, and the grounds will be full of crafters and artists selling hand thrown pottery, candles, wreaths, holiday décor, pumpkins, woodcrafts, scented oils, stained glass, handmade puppets, and quilts, jewelry, and lots more! There will be children's activities and decorated pumpkins to buy!

Returning is Schmidt's Restaurant from German Village, Columbus. They will offer Bahama Mammals, knockwurst, German bologna, German potato salad, kraut, sweet red cabbage, pork or chicken brats, and their famous jumbo cream puffs! If you have not had one, you do not know what you are missing! Heavenly!

Returning, also, is Poppy's Smokehouse Food Truck with their barbeque ribs and pulled pork and pulled chicken. Layla's Sweet Treats will once again offer premium hand-dipped ice cream in cups, waffle cones, milkshakes, and sundaes!!

Carter's Chimney Cakes were a big hit last year and we are excited they will be returning. A chimney cake is a traditional Hungarian dessert or Eastern European street food. It is simply a sweet dough wrapped around a spit cooked over a rotisserie grill, crispy on the outside and soft on the inside. Delicious toppings are then added such as Oreos, cinnamon sugar, coconut, and sprinkles. When stood up straight, the hot steam comes out from the top of the cake looking like a chimney. They can be made traditional cake style or as a cone filled with goodness. This is a traditional Oktoberfest food and one we are excited to offer our guests! They sold out last year – get there early!

A local favorite, Farmer's Daughter will be offering their homemade specials and various vendors will be offering cookies, French macarons, breads, kettle corn and other delights! Additional food trucks, offering Mexican fare, bourbon chicken, pizza, and lots more will ensure something to fit every taste!

No Oktoberfest is complete without beer and the beer trailer will offer a large variety of your favorites!

Entertainment is being finalized and we are excited to announce we have added Wayne Hobbs to the program. Mr. Hobbs is a steel guitarist who has performed with Barbara Mandrell, Marty Robbins, and many others in the music industry. We welcome him to Urbana and our Oktoberfest!

Delicious food, live entertainment, and an admission price of only \$3.00 – what could be better? Mark your calendar and don't miss this day of fun for the whole family!



Champaign County Historical Society
Urbana, Ohio

Oktoberfest!

October 1st, 2023
10:00 am to 4:00 pm



Schmitt's
SAUSAGE TRUCK
German Sausage, Ohio
Authentic
German Food
& Famous
Cream Puffs

Come Celebrate Fall at The Museum!

***CASH ONLY ADMISSION: \$3.00**
CHILDREN UNDER 10 FREE
WITH PAID ADULT

- 📍 809 E LAWN AVE, URBANA, OHIO
- ☎ 937-653-6721
- 🌐 www.champaigncountyhistoricalmuseum.org
- 📌 Champaign County Historical Museum
- ✉ champaigncohistory@gmail.com



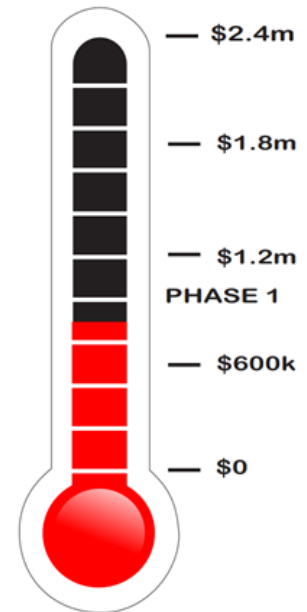
EXPANSION PROJECT UPDATE

As reported in the last newsletter, we entered into a Design-Build Agreement with Marker Construction to commence the development of construction documents for Phase 1 and future Phases of the Expansion Project.

With earnest, Marker coordinated an environmental study, site survey, an assessment of future water and sanitary sewer requirements and gas lines and electric services. Although some modifications to comply with building and construction codes will be necessary, no major issues surfaced that will materially change the timeline or cost of the project.

Regarding the existing building layout, a decision was reached to move the current administrative area to the upper floor of the original building. The current administrative area will be converted into exhibit space.

Marker is a few weeks away from finalizing construction documents and cost estimates for Phase 1. Once complete, we will enter into a grant agreement with the State of Ohio and update our capital campaign materials.



FUNDRAISING EFFORTS

Fair

To raise public awareness of our Expansion Plan, we maintained a booth at the Champaign County Fair wherein we displayed our project easel and handed out various capital campaign materials.

Crowd funding

To reach an audience outside Champaign County, we recently enlisted the help of Patronicity, “a civic crowd funding and crowd granting platform.” Many thanks to John Bry of Urbana, Ohio for introducing us to this service and setting up our campaign on the platform. The campaign goal is to raise \$25,000 by September 9th. You may see the campaign details by following this link:

https://www.patronicity.com/project/history_in_the_making

NOTE: While you may contribute to our campaign by this platform, a direct contribution to the museum avoids fees charged to the museum for this service.

Direct Appeals to Potential Donors

Now that the detailed work of obtaining “hard” construction cost estimates and a final building design for Phase 1 is nearly behind us, the Capital Campaign Committee will ramp up its efforts to appeal to various potential donors - individuals, industry, agriculture, and foundations - to contribute to our capital campaign.

As always, thank you for all your past and future support of this project!

UPCOMING PROGRAMS



September 24, 2023, Julie Johnson will be giving a presentation on the history of the Urbana Country Club. The program starts at 2 p.m. at the Champaign County Historical Society Museum.

On October 15, 2023, Ray Snedager, who was the loadmaster for “Operation Babylift,” will be giving a program about “Operation Babylift.” The program starts at 2 p.m. at the Champaign County Historical Society.



CHRISTMAS DINNER

Mark your calendars for the annual Christmas dinner to be held Dec. 10 beginning with social hour at 4:00 pm. followed by dinner catered by Amy Forest of In Good Taste Catering.

As in the past, to ensure a comfortable dining experience, there will be a reservation limit of 60 people. Menu details and ticket costs are in the planning stages – stay tuned for updates.



Bring your friends and enjoy an afternoon of holiday music, flickering candles, and delicious food!

NILES SANATORIUM by Candy Gilliam

In 1904, a group of businessmen gathered together for the purpose of creating a board of directors for a new county sanatorium, one that would combine the Parkhurst Willow Park Sanatorium of St. Paris with the Urbana Sanatorium. Sanatoriums were widely used to treat a variety of illnesses, to help people rest and recuperate, and to free them from the bondage of alcohol and drug addiction. Many citizens felt Champaign County was in need of a specialized hospital conveniently available to everyone. The site selected was a building on the corner of North Main St.



Niles Sanatorium, 1911.

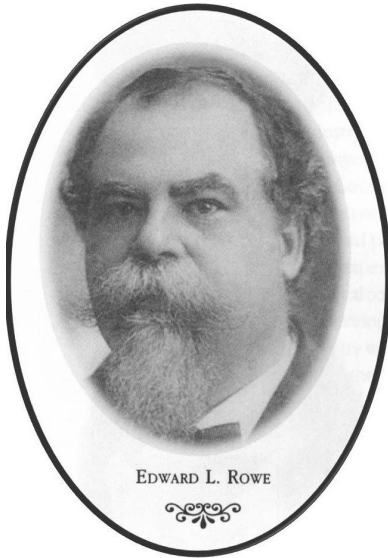
and Laurel Oak St. This large facility was 22,000 square feet and sat on two acres. It was originally constructed as a seminary in 1852, then later purchased by the St. Mary's Catholic Church in 1878. St. Mary's Catholic Church occupied a parochial school there until a local priest did not like the distance of the school from the church and sold the building. The new Champaign County Sanatorium Company was created after a large percentage of stock was taken, and the building was bought for \$8,300.00. The new officers were Marion W. Thomas, President; Major Thomas T. Brand, Vice President; Louis Orr, Secretary; Dr. Henry C. Houston, Treasurer and Dr. George W. Pickering as the general manager. A few months later, Mr. Thomas prevailed upon the board to make extensive improvements to the interior in order to make the institution worthy of support by Urbana citizens. As such, over \$13,000.00 (equivalent to \$400,000.00 in 2023) was spent to make this a top-notch facility. Located on the first floor were offices and a suite of rooms occupied by the manager. Nearby was the kitchen, a dining room, bath rooms, a parlor and several wards. A broad central stairway led to additional floors. The second floor contained billiard tables and provided an amusement area complete with a large stage used for visiting theatrical groups or lecturers. This floor also housed the electrical rooms where treatments for cancer were located, as well as an operating room. The rooms were complete in every detail. No expense was spared in purchasing hospital equipment, including X-ray machines, a Finsen Lamp, and two electrical bath cabinets to treat skin diseases, gout, headaches, constipation, rheumatism and nervous troubles. The operating room was kept heated at all times, always ready for the surgeons and emergencies. This floor was also the Women's Area, with the east end devoted to treatment of female problems. Each room was made to be as cheerful as

Ad from Urbana Daily Times Citizen, June 2, 1906.

THE NILES SANITORIUM COMPANY
**ELECTRIC LIGHT
BATH CABINET**
Sure Cure ^{FOR} Rheumatism
Those desiring treatment
will please make engage-
ments after 5:30 p. m.
BOTH PHONES
The Niles Sanatorium Co.

possible, with new beds, bedding, wardrobes, and area rugs. The Men's Area was located on the third floor. Here the men enjoyed relaxing club and lounging rooms, bath rooms, and a barber shop. This floor also housed the inebriate department, fixed up to treat alcoholics and drug addicts. The fourth floor was set aside strictly for the use of nurses and attendants. On the outside grounds, a barn and stable sat behind the property, while a newly completed two-story brick structure was built, called the Annex. This was used as a power house and laundry area. In the Annex basement was located the gas engines and boilers used to generate electricity. This enabled the sanatorium to have light at any time, day or night. The steam from the boilers was used to pipe heat throughout the main building. The boiler rooms

connected to an underground tunnel leading back to the sanatorium for easy access. The ground floor of this power house was the laundry rooms with up-to-date stationary washing tubs and drying areas, while the upstairs were sleeping rooms for hired help.



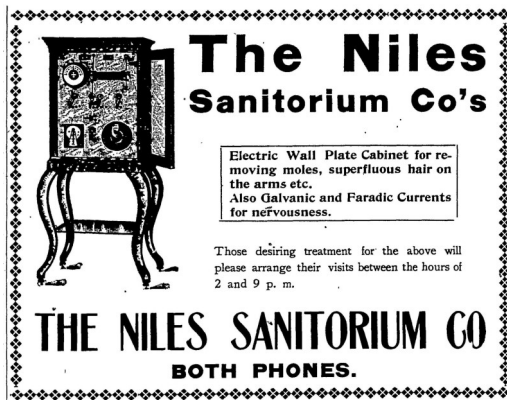
*Edward Rowe Sr.—President
of Niles Sanatorium*

In 1905, a Dayton attorney, Mr. Edward Rowe, Sr., was compelled to send his son to the sanatorium for alcohol and drug use. While his son, Edward Rowe, Jr., was a patient here, the elder Rowe became extremely interested in the institution. He saw the importance of the place and decided to take action to become part of a great business opportunity. He paid off the sanatorium's \$13,000.00 debt, then quickly bought enough stock to gain controlling interest as a stockholder. He became the new president, and a few months later, he placed his newly recovered son as the secretary in charge of correspondence and advertising. Meanwhile, an elderly couple by the name of John and Amanda Niles, who were living on a farm in the countryside, became patients of the sanatorium. John Niles owned 600 acres, several farms, and was considered one of the wealthiest men in Champaign County with a value over \$50,000.00 (equivalent to 1.5 million in 2023). While Mr. Niles was convalescing at the sanatorium, he was impressed with the atmosphere and staff. Since they had no children of their own, he decided to leave his entire estate to the sanatorium in

exchange for permanent residency. Mr. Niles figured the rents from his profitable farms would support the upkeep of the sanatorium buildings as well as to help the indigent and poor with their hospital expenses. He believed in establishing an endowment fund for the perpetual care and treatment of anyone who could not afford medical care. In August, 1905, Mr. Niles signed the legal paperwork giving the sanatorium his estate, with the condition that he and his wife live on the premises and be comfortably cared for the rest of their lives. In appreciation, the Champaign County Sanatorium Company officially changed its name to the Niles Sanatorium. But by the end of the year, the extended family members of John and Amanda Niles disagreed with Mr. Niles' decision and filed lawsuits to have him adjudged insane and demanded the estate be given back to the family. They felt he was unable to understand his finances, nor was he capable of handling his vast estate, and they wanted a guardian appointed. In 1906, the court declared John Niles an imbecile and too weak of body and mind to comprehend the scope of such a large transaction. This, of course, was immediately appealed, but before anything could be done, the attorney for Mr. Niles suddenly died and the case was temporarily stalled. During these months of legal proceedings, Edward Rowe, Jr., who was now the assistant manager, was a tireless worker and devoted his time to making the sanatorium the best facility known in the state. He continued to make improvements by installing hard wood floors throughout the entire place, installed an elevator large enough to put a cot in, he added another stairway to the third floor, remodeled the fourth floor with good beds, and added fire escapes. These renovations added another \$15,000.00 to the sanatoriums debt. And because of this, John Niles had a change of heart and decided he wanted his property back. He stated he was lead to believe the institution was flourishing and well managed, but he was misinformed and deceived when he discovered the sanatorium was in tremendous debt again.



NILES SANATORIUM by Candy Gilliam



The Niles Sanatorium Co's

Electric Wall Plate Cabinet for removing moles, superfluous hair on the arms etc. Also Galvanic and Faradic Currents for nervousness.

Those desiring treatment for the above will please arrange their visits between the hours of 2 and 9 p. m.

THE NILES SANATORIUM CO

BOTH PHONES.

Ad from the Urbana Morning Tribune, June 6, 1906.

Niles was also upset he was not being treated in the manner he was promised. He felt he was abused by having to wait for his meals, being refused admittance to the dining room during reasonable hours and the staff was calling him names. Immediately, the directors met with John Niles to rectify this situation, and Niles dismissed his lawsuit. But this did not stop the courts from appointing a guardian. When the guardian arrived to request his financial information, Niles became irate, considered this an outrage and insisted he could attend his own affairs. Eventually, the courts agreed, and the guardianship was terminated. Sadly, just weeks later in November, John Niles passed away from pneumonia, and his estate was again in limbo. More than a year later in 1908, the battle

for possession of the Niles Estate was still in full force. Those involved were the Champaign County Commissioners, The Niles Sanatorium and the Niles Heirs. The County Commissioners claimed in John Niles original will, dated 1896, they were given his estate to benefit and maintain the Children's Home. They claimed Niles was under the influence of the sanatorium directors when the second will was made. The Niles Sanatorium said the commissioners never had a claim, and the 1905 will was legal. Lewellen Niles, brother of John Niles, wanted the will set aside as he claimed his brother was not of sound mind and coerced by others. He further stated the sanatorium was neglecting the farm properties, refused to pay taxes, and the manager did not keep accurate books since money was unaccounted for. In 1909, after months of testimony to John Niles mental state, the court finally ruled the Niles Sanatorium was the legal owner and should have immediate possession of the estate. However, as an inheritance, Lewellen Niles did receive \$800, and the four sisters of Amanda Niles received \$400 each.

In 1910, problems began to emerge when Edward Rowe, Jr. resigned his position as manager. It was discovered Rowe, Jr. had indeed been reckless with money management, and during the previous four years, had quickly squandered the sanatorium resources from the Niles Estate. Rowe, Jr. had a history of alcohol and morphine addictions, and had often been a patient of the sanatorium. But this time, his father, Edward Rowe, Sr. fired him after discovering his son breaking into the liquor closet as well as stealing drugs and money. After Rowe, Jr. left, it was further discovered much of the hospital equipment was damaged and not maintained. Despite this, Rowe, Sr. continued to keep the sanatorium open, sometimes at his own expense. He made special rates when funds were low, as well as extended many patients stay when he knew they couldn't pay. Edward Rowe, Sr. suffered from severe rheumatism and died in 1911. Since Rowe, Sr. was the majority stockholder, his wife controlled the Niles Sanatorium after his death. And the financial situation did not improve as the years went by. In 1912, the stockholders grew impatient with the continued debt and demanded an accounting of funds. They blamed Edward Rowe, Jr. for putting the sanatorium in this distress, but also felt there was enough property and stocks to settle the debts, and claimed the Rowe family was refusing to pay. Merchants were filing lawsuits and receiving judgments against the sanatorium. The financial

From the Dayton Herald, Sept. 2, 1909.



THE NILES SANATORIUM, URBANA, OHIO

A modern hospital and home for the care and treatment of all forms of nervous and mild mental disorders, melancholia, hysteria, paralysis, and chronic cases; also for alcoholic and drug addictions. An up-to-date surgical room and ward. A complete electrical outfit. Prominent physicians in charge, and graduate nurses in attendance.

Separate Department and Ward for Alcoholic and Drug Patients.

The Sanatorium is beautifully located. Fine drives and of easy access. Large verandas and cheerful outside rooms, with and without bath. Heated by steam and lighted by electricity. Charges moderate. Edward L. Rowe, Attorney at Dayton, is the President.

Send for descriptive circular and for terms to

EDWARD L. ROWE, JR.
Secretary of Niles Sanatorium Co., Urbana, Ohio.

difficulties were reaching a critical point, and fears of bankruptcy were looming. The board of directors fervently tried contacting Mrs. Minette Rowe, who was living in New York, with telegrams asking her to please send money from the stocks she owned to help save the sanatorium that her husband loved so dearly. She refused to help. By the end of the year, the Niles Sanatorium filed for bankruptcy and the building was scheduled to be sold at auction. In April, 1913, with a large crowd attending, the Niles Sanatorium was sold on the courthouse steps. It was sold to Mr. Winfield Rowe, brother of Edward Rowe, Sr., for \$10,400.00 (equivalent to \$320,000.00 in 2023). Winfield Rowe planned to take over the sanatorium, but before the deed was signed, he unexpectedly passed away that summer. Because he had no immediate heirs, the deed to the property was given back to Minette Rowe and her daughter Bessie. For the next year, she leased the sanatorium to Dr. George Pickering, who faithfully continued keeping the hospital open and patients were still taken care of during this time. In 1914, Minette Rowe ordered the sanatorium to close and no more patients were seen after August. A very disappointed Dr. Pickering left to become a private doctor. After sitting vacant for two years, the building was sold again at auction in 1916. It was purchased for \$5,500.00 by Marion Thomas, a previous board of director of the Niles Sanatorium. After careful consideration and planning, he decided to redesign the building into apartments. Bad luck struck again when Mr. Thomas died three months later of kidney problems, before any of his remodeling could happen. In 1917, the building was sold a final time and purchased by Mr. Hugh Creighton, owner of The American Tool and Die Company. He tore down most of the sanatorium and converted the front portion into a modern double house. He used the bricks to construct a separate manufacturing plant on the west side of the lot. Mr. Creighton retired at age 90 years and reluctantly sold his building in 1965 to Ultra-Met Manufacturing Company, but he continued to live in the house until his death in 1971. Ultra-Met Carbide Technologies is still located at the property on North Main St, manufacturing custom molded tungsten carbide products.



Niles Tombstone—Oak Dale Cemetery.



2023 View of the property.

Mission Statement

The Champaign County Historical Society collects, preserves, and interprets relevant artifacts, documents, and other resources from Champaign County to educate current and future generations about our history.

Welcome New Members

Myron & Clarissa Feather

Celesta Dunn

Marilyn B. Foulk

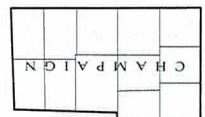
Rochiel Foulk

Jennifer Shaffer Merry

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CHAMPAIGN COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
MUSEUM