

# Bainbridge Township Historical Society Newsletter

Volume 4, Issue 1

Bainbridge Township, Ohio, 44023

Winter/Spring 2009

## GAMBLING IN BAINBRIDGE TOWNSHIP



Bainbridge Race Track

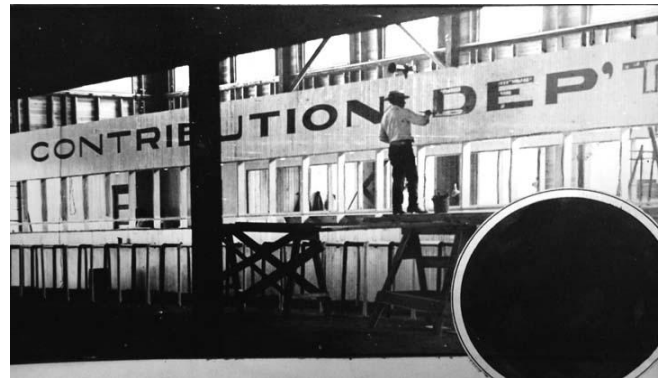
Gambling came to Geauga County during the late 1920s when law enforcement closed down betting operations in Cleveland and Akron, and it continued to flourish here until the late 1950s. Although betting was shut down from time to time by state law enforcement, business resumed once the heat was off. But gambling brought income to this area in the hard times of the Depression and the years during and after World War II and Korea, and Geauga officials were loathe to interfere -- making only token raids on rare occasions with arrests of minor participants who walked away with a slap on the wrist. In July, 1928 a citizens' Law Enforcement Committee was formed to defeat the sheriff and county prosecutor because of their inaction, to which Sheriff Frank Nelson responded that although there were rumors of gambling in Bainbridge, sufficient evidence could not be obtained.

News editors railed against the softening of public morals and the harvest of crime that would follow, while promoters feared the committee might jeopardize a new race track in the Geauga Lake area set to open on July 21st -- each admission ticket to provide a donation of 15 cents to Bainbridge and 10 cents to Geauga. While part of the racetrack complex was not in Geauga County, betting was done here to thwart Cuyahoga County officials. Geauga farmers benefited from sales of hay and grain for the horses. In February, 1940, the Plain Dealer reported that "slot machines whirl merrily throughout most of the county without hindrance" in restaurants, gas stations, grocery stores, butcher shops and taverns -- some of them only a short distance from Char-don where Geauga Sheriff H.O. Hill stated that no citizen or official had complained. County Prosecutor, Harold Bostwick, said he would

take legal action if he received a complaint but none had been made nor did he know the location of any slot machines. The article went on to describe several places including a gas station on Rtes. 306 and 87 in Russell, the Middlefield Tavern and Tall Timbers restaurant on old Rte. 422 at the Bainbridge/Auburn line. One of the best known gambling spots was the Pettibone Club, located just inside the Geauga county line near Aurora and Pettibone Roads. It became quite a large-scale operation that was open every night as well as Wednesday and Sunday afternoons. It began operations in the 1930s as the Arrow Club and continued for many years until it was temporarily closed by Ohio Governor Frank Lausche. It quickly resumed operations under the Pettibone Club name when additions were made to the building. It was reported that 100 slot machines were lined up for use together with card and dice games, liquor and food. Deliveries of meat and produce were made for the club's restaurant by Jaros/Sargent's Bainbridge store (now part of Century Village), and they were happy to get this business. The Club operated into the 1950s. Another gambling spot in the township on Chillicothe Road referred to as the



Paddock At The Race Track



Repaint of Ticket Window to Contributions

"barn" later became home to the Valley Presbyterian Church in 1958. It was reported by Frank Stanek who lived on Chagrin Road that the buildings were erected about 1923 by John Wright who farmed a large acreage which he sold in 1925, and the house and barn were purchased by betting promoters who ran a casino for many years. He went on to talk of the line of expensive cars that snaked down Chagrin Road early Sunday afternoons and back again at night. As a result of the road's poor condition in bad weather, the gamblers had it paved to the delight of the residents. Later, a new road grader was purchased by the township; and in 1941, permanent bleachers for the new Bainbridge school on Chillicothe Road were erected with funds obtained from betting activities. Many of our long-time residents also remember the jobs that pro-



Starting Tower at Race Track



Aerial View of the Pettibone Club 1947

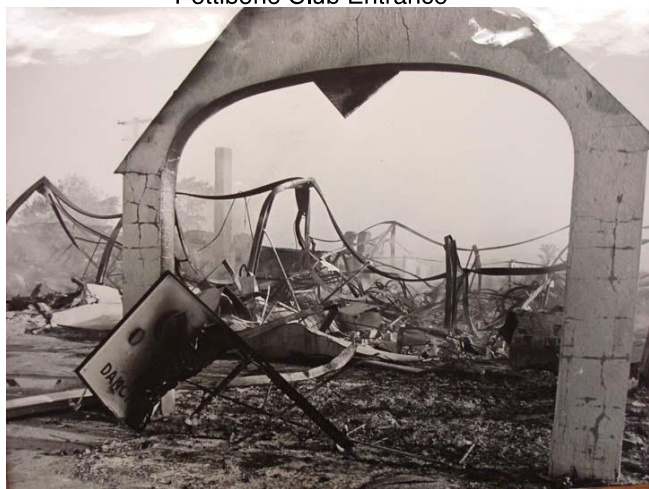
Courtesy of Plain Dealer



Pettibone Club Entrance



Dinning Room



Burnt Ruins of Pettibone Club - 1963



Rothkopf Barn

vided money when it was sorely needed. After World War II, the betting operations were bought by Louis Rothkopf who updated the house and barn in luxurious décor. Many speak of Rothkopf with appreciation for the kindnesses he showed them. Rothkopf committed suicide in the late 1950s after his wife took her life a year earlier. Despite many attempts over the years by the state and local citizens' groups to shut down gambling, it continued in the county until the late 1950s. The townships, the county as well as local businesses, residents (and politicians too) all benefited, and the predicted crime wave never materialized.

*Story by Harriet Novy. Pictures courtesy of Cleveland Press and Cleveland Plain Dealer*



Tall Timbers, another place with Slot Machines



Meet Midge & Dan McClellan, Geauga County Sherriff, our speaker at our February Meeting.

Officers 2009

**President**

Karl Kuckelheim

**Vice President**

**&**

**Program Chairman**

Donna Yuse

543-3199

**Secretary**

Harriet Novy

**Treasurer**

Shirley Takacs

**Membership Chairman**

Marge Cook

440-338-5375

**Editor & Publisher**

Bill Takacs

**Meetings of the Bainbridge Township Historical Society are held the second Wednesday of the month (September through June) at 7:30 p.m. in the Burns-Lindow Building at the corner of Route 306 and Bainbridge-Solon Road.**

**Bainbridge Township Historical Society**

**P.O.Box 23363**

**Bainbridge Township**

**OH 44023-0363**



Town Hall—Circa 1914  
Now—Burns Lindow Bldg



ANOTHER THANK YOU TO TOM EAKIN

Our long-time benefactor, Tom Eakin, stopped by before our February meeting to present President, Karl Kuckelheim, with a very generous donation of \$455.00. Mr. Eakin has been very kind to us over many years. As you know Mr. Eakin's TCE Enterprises has prepared the interesting school and sports calendars for Kenston and the Bainbridge community for a very long time; and this season, he was kind enough to give mention to the Bainbridge Township Historical Society on the front page. Shown here is Tom Eakin with Karl Kuckelheim. Members were most appreciative of his thoughtfulness and generosity.

**A big thank you to Gerry Chittock and Carole Malz for refreshments at our February Meeting.**

**Welcome new Member—Donald Marous**

**Please—We are looking for more pictures and articles on Bainbridge Township History.**

**Bill Takacs— 440-543-4991**

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\* **Just a Reminder—Annual dues are Payable in September but no later than December—\$10.00 for singles, \$20.00 for family. Life Membership—\$100.00. Make checks payable to *Bainbridge Township Historical Society*. Pay Marge Cook at the meeting or mail to her at 116 Leaview Ln., Chagrin Falls, OH 44022.** \*  
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P.O.Box 23363  
Bainbridge Twp.OH 44023-0363

**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**

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**DATED MATERIAL – PLEASE DELIVER PROMPTLY**  
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## **2009 Meeting Schedule**

**March 11th, 2009:** Early Auto History in the Western Reserve. Bill Takacs will be Speaker

**April 8th, 2009:** Lee Bissell will give history on the Bissell Family.

**May 13th, 2009:** HalseyGates Handyside will speak on the Family History of—  
GATES, HOLSEY (HALSEY) (1799-2 Nov. 1865) was an early settler of the WEST-  
ERN RESERVE

**June 10th, 2009:** Our annual picnic. Time and place to be announced.

**July & August:** No Meetings—Watch for our next newsletter for our fall program schedule

**Check out our web page [www.bainbridgemory.org](http://www.bainbridgemory.org)**