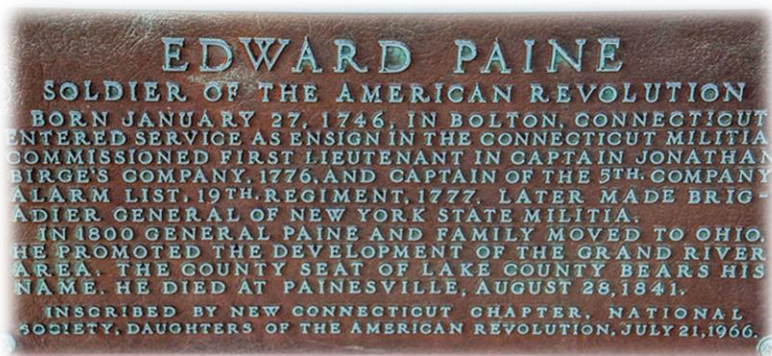


Hidden Gems: Downtown Painesville's Spirit of the Season

Hot chocolate, live reindeer, an outdoor skating rink, a Holiday Stroll, the Tree Lighting ceremony, Candy Cane Cottage memories -- these celebrate the Christmas season's return to full vigor on Painesville Square and its surroundings. In a departure from my normal ramblings about local lore and county history, the final entry for 2022 features a pictorial look at the past when greater Painesville included Concord Township, Leroy Township, Painesville Township, Fairport Harbor, parts of Mentor and Perry. On July 15, 2020, the National Registration of Historic Places designated 25 acres of Painesville, 40 contributing buildings, Veterans Park and Painesville





Square to the official registry. Names familiar to county residents are the Thomas Harvey House, Eber Howe House, Steele Mansion (original on the square and current one), Lake Erie College Hall, YMCA both sites, Mathews House, Morley House, Seth Marshall Home, Parmly Hotel, and Cleveland Trust Bank among many others. A little Painesville history and a nostalgic look at city memories punctuate this Hidden Gems December edition of our county history.

Located 2.5 miles from the

Lake Erie shore, and 30 miles northeast of Cleveland, is a seven square mile of expanse of land that dates back to 1798 and the Connecticut Land Company. Surveyed by a man with the last name Paine, its earliest incarnation was [Oak Openings](#) in 1800. In the more than two hundred years since, the town has witnessed a long history that includes gristmills, the Underground Railroad, the invention of the Vulcan automobile, early rail lines and the daring early flights made by female pilots like Marge Hurlbert and Connie Luhta.

Surveyed as part of the Western Reserve, John Walworth and General Edward Paine were early settlers in what was known as New





Market (1803-1806). Nearby Oak Openings first appeared just south of New Market, which had the first township government and post office. In 1805, General Henry Champion settled in this area. Renamed Champion, it lasted until 1832 when the name Painesville was selected. At first a village, Painesville became a town by 1852 and a city designation followed in 1902. In the mid-1800s, Painesville was the largest community between Cleveland and Erie, Pennsylvania. From 1830-1960s, Painesville was a booming metropolis with a small-town feeling. Two railroad lines, four newspapers, five churches and three banks were located downtown. A Federal Reserve Bank produced \$20 notes for the country (now the home of the Lake County Visitors Bureau). A 1926 *Telegraph* article insert covered this major event in history. Until bank branches and the development of the Great Lakes Mall in the early 1960s took shape,

downtown Painesville was the financial and shopping mecca as well as the hub of most county commerce.

This era of development added some other city and county landmarks to the history. On July 3, 1880, James A. Garfield dedicated the Civil War Monument found on the square adjacent to the Painesville United Methodist



Church.

John Ollila of Fairport Harbor and Mentor recalled the following about Painesville Square from his youth in the 1950-60s. Carlisle's Department Store, the Parnly Hotel, a Sears & Roebuck store, and Cleveland Trust Bank. The original YMCA which was located in the old Steele family mansion at 44 S. Park Place. It even had a diving board that challenged swimmers with its low ceiling. John recalls the moving of the YMCA to its present location circa 1957, because his mom had taught swim classes there from the late 1930s on.





Vance Todd, retired librarian for the Fairport Harbor Public Library shared this interesting tidbit about Painesville Public Square. A 1964 film release, *One Potato, Two Potato*, used street and square scenes in the filming. The movie won an award at the Cannes Film Festival that year. Fairporter Stanley Braid was one of several village residents who had a part in the production. Released on DVD a few years back, copies of the film are at the Morley Library and via *Kanopy* with a Willoughby-Eastlake or Mentor Library card.



Included here are a series of vintage photos from Doug Advey, whose family printing business transcends much of Painesville's timeline. Please recall fondly the heyday of a booming Painesville era when small town flavor came to the square. This holiday season offers a chance to visit, enjoy seasonal traditions and even some wintry nostalgia.

Sources: Doug Advey slide presentation of Painesville, Louise Kloss and the Morley Library archives, John Ollila boyhood memories, Vance Todd-retired librarian, Fairport Harbor Public Library

Submitted by Dan Maxson - *Local Lore by Max (2010-2016)*, *News-Herald Community Media Lab* - Trustee, Curator - FHHS / Fairport Harbor Lighthouse & Marine Museum - Curator / Docent - Old Stone School, Concord Township

