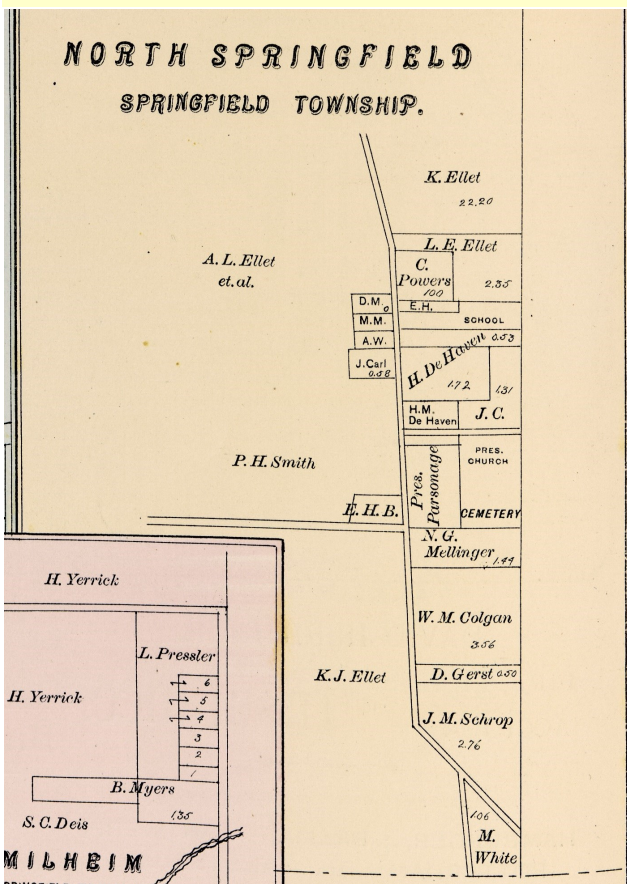


# Past Pursuits

A Newsletter of the Special Collections Division  
Akron-Summit County Public Library

Volume 19 Number 2 2020



North Springfield in Illustrated Summit County Ohio, 1891. From the Online Map Room, Summit Memory.

## From North Springfield to Ellet: An Akron Annexation Tale

by Cheri Goldner, Librarian

Located in the southeast corner of Akron, the area that we know as Ellet today previously lay in the northwest corner of Springfield Township. Early settlers called the area by different names—the Burgh, Springfield Center, North Springfield—but county atlases reveal a strong Ellet connection from the start, the surname appearing on multiple parcels of land.

Englishman Samuel J. Elliott/Ellet (1757-1841) was among Springfield’s earliest white settlers, having moved to the area from Maryland in 1810 and purchased over 500 acres of land from Colonel Simon Perkins. One of the sons who moved with him to Ohio, David (1792-1850), later purchased the largest portion of his land, near present day Canton Road and Albrecht Avenue. David’s son, David Jr. (1827-1916), was the first white child born in Springfield Township. David Jr. and his wife, first cousin Keziah J. (1827-1905), had two children who predeceased them, Sarah Elizabeth (1850-1868) and Arthur (1868-1897), and two daughters who survived him, Lucinda Elvira (1854-1931) and Minnie Jane (1861-1945), the subject of this issue’s “Getting to Know...” column.

North Springfield grew steadily and had a population of 1,500 by 1830. Its earliest church, founded in 1809, was North Springfield Presbyterian. Located at the crossroads of the old Mogadore and Springfield Center Roads (now Albrecht Avenue and Canton Road), the church was central to the community in more ways than one, and the Ellets were prominent church members. David Sr. donated a portion of land to the organization, David Jr. served as an elder until his death in 1916, and Minnie became well known for her church and temperance causes. All three and many other members of the Ellet family are buried in the church cemetery. You can find transcriptions in the Springfield Township Cemetery Transcriptions book on our [website](#), completed by former Special Collections staff member Mike Elliott.

North Springfield remained primarily rural until the post-World War I boom brought an influx of new residents to the Akron area. Rural lots quickly filled with homes. With the

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*North Springfield Presbyterian Church, 1943.  
From the Akron Beacon Journal Photograph  
Collection, Summit Memory.*

new residents came a demand for services. As Richard Gardner writes in his book *Memories of Ellet: Only Yesterday* (available online through the [Ellet Historical Society](#)), “there were long waiting lists for electric and phone services. Gas, sewer, and water weren’t even viable options, and transportation was in the same nearly impossible state.”

Springfield Township School, a brick structure built in 1891, was too small to house its increased student population. Administrators added six “portables,” wooden one-room structures, from 1916-1918. Though meant to be temporary, the school used those portables as well as others added later into the late 1940s, long after the school became part of Akron Public Schools and was called Ellet High School.

It was also during the post-World War I boom that the area got a new post office. At that time, citizens voted in a general store on “an authentic town title.” Since the building stood on land once owned by David Ellet, Jr.,

“Ellet” was the clear winner.

Residents battled over the merits of annexation to the City of Akron for years before finally agreeing. On March 17, 1928, the Ellet Board of Trade unanimously passed a resolution to circulate petitions asking the City of Akron for annexation. On April 2, 1929, the Akron City Council formally voted to annex Ellet and the Municipal Airport. Some lamented the “loss” of Ellet, but pride in the area continues to live on.

## ***Past Pursuits* Going Digital Only**

It’s time for a change! Beginning with the Winter issue published around January 1, we will no longer produce print issues of *Past Pursuits* sent to subscribers by U.S. mail. It will be available by digital subscription only. If you’re receiving a print issue of *Past Pursuits* and wish to continue receiving it digitally, visit Special Collections’ website at [akronlibrary.org/locations/main-library/special-collections](http://akronlibrary.org/locations/main-library/special-collections), select “Our Newsletter,” and click on “subscribe online” to enter your name and email address. You’ll receive regular email notifications with a link to download the latest issue.

## **Program Updates: Late Night Canceled, New Virtual Events**

We are saddened to announce that given the continued restriction of gatherings to ten participants and additional virus-related guidelines from our state government and Library administration, our Late Night at the Library event this year is **canceled**. However, we are rescheduling speaker Kelli Bergheimer, who was originally set to visit us May 9. She will appear virtually via Zoom on **Saturday, October 17, 10:30 am-1 pm**, to present two sessions: “Family Tree Software Options” and “Organization and Citation for the Family Historian.” We will also be resuming our monthly DNA genealogy discussion group starting **Monday, October 19, 6-7 pm**. This session will be held via Zoom. More information and registration are available on our [Events page](#).



Special Collections is working on ideas to develop more virtual programming and online instruction for our genealogy and local history audiences, so stay tuned to our [website](#) and [Facebook](#) pages for future events.



# Getting to Know...Minnie Ellet

by Jane Gramlich, Librarian

Ellet's history isn't complete without a tribute to its founder's descendant, the bold and beloved force of nature named Minnie Ellet. For decades she was a prominent figure in the Akron area, well known for a life devoted to service and activism. Her primary causes, women's suffrage and prohibition, were the two hot-button issues of her time and she lived to experience momentous changes. Independent and never married, as her family name became synonymous with her community, her community also became her family.

Minnie Jane Ellet was born in January 1861 in a farmhouse that once stood near the current intersection of Canton Road and Wedgewood Drive. She was the third of four children of David and Keziah Ellet and the great-granddaughter of Samuel Ellet, who arrived in the area around 1810. Education was the foundation of her life's work. In March 1879, after attending Middlebury School, she passed the state teachers' examination and earned a six-month teaching certificate. By 1885, it extended into a four-year certificate. An *Akron Beacon Journal* article shows that she attended Buchtel College in 1886; *Memories of Ellet* reports that she was a graduate. She left to teach in the Dakota Territory in 1887. Returning from this extended sojourn by late 1891, the village east of Akron remained her home for the rest of her life.



Akron Beacon Journal,  
November 9, 1933.



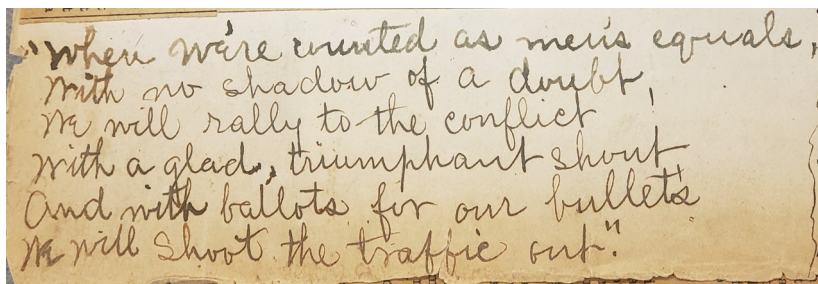
Akron Beacon  
Journal, June 27,  
1935.

Ellet's pen was partly her sword, and her long writing career centered on local journalism. She began as a columnist and correspondent for the *Beacon*, a role she relished without any compensation for over fifty years. Fittingly, her first article in October 1882 focused on a Women's Foreign Missionary Society meeting at her family's church, North Springfield Presbyterian. She sometimes wrote under pen names including "Merry Jane" and later "Merry Jane K. Lamity." At first, her columns focused on the residents and events of the Springfield area. By 1910, her repertoire expanded into a series of essays covering early Ellet history. It wasn't long before she was firing off peppery letters to the editor and making sure her voice was heard.

Yet Ellet wasn't content with words alone. Her fearless actions, often backed up by legal counsel over property rights, also spoke loudly. Twice, anti-prohibition signs landed on or too close to her homestead, and she proceeded to cover them up with paint or her own posters. In 1935, at age 74, an advertising company to which she had leased her land put up a billboard in the midst of a rent dispute. This time she went a step further and took an axe to it. Her loyalty to North Springfield Presbyterian Church didn't stop her from filing suit against the church for violating terms of use of land her grandfather had deeded to it. Yet she could reach out as much as stamp out. Much of her time was devoted to working with local organizations. She distributed Bibles and pamphlets printed at her own expense to anyone who would take them, gifted land to Ellet School to be used as a playground, and donated homemade quilts for those in poverty.

Over the years, her reputation as an unstoppable crusader grew. Despite her irascible nature, some found it difficult to dislike her. She was known both as "the local Carrie Nation" and "the Grand Old Lady of Ellet." She garnered considerable local press, especially from fellow chroniclers of Akron's history. Later in life Ellet recalled that Hugh Allen, managing editor of the *Beacon* and author of *Rubber's Hometown*, paid homage to her in a Cleveland *Plain Dealer* article titled "She Mothers Newsmen While She Fights Booze." When Ellet was annexed to Akron in 1929, one reporter noticed that at that point she would become "a legal

and accredited resident of Akron” with an accompanying warning to beware: “She can out-write, out-talk and out-argue any other civic entity in Christendom.” Ruth McKenney, *Beacon* reporter and author of *Industrial Valley*, was Ellet’s polar opposite in most political and religious viewpoints. Yet McKenney penned several appreciative stories about her in the mid-1930s. The feeling was mutual. In 1939, Ellet wrote that she “loves her ‘news’ sons and daughters and prays for them.”



Margin of a page in Minnie Ellet’s scrapbook.

Much of Ellet’s outlook is summed up in one of her scrapbooks, a heavy, fragile volume that’s now among our archival collections. She repurposed an old leather-bound world atlas with dozens of pasted articles on importance of a woman’s vote, the evils of drink, political developments, and chronicles of the Presbyterian Church. Intertwined with the articles are handwritten poems and musings, expressions of her religious faith, and a few rare photos. One poem in the scrapbook neatly wraps up her twin passions: “When we’re counted as men’s equals/With no shadow of a doubt/We will rally to the conflict/With a glad triumphant shout/And with ballots as our bullets/We will shoot the traffic out.” When Prohibition was repealed in 1933, Ellet was disheartened but not defeated, insisting that one day it would return. Though that hasn’t happened, she would be glad to know the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment is still in effect and that her efforts haven’t been lost on the women of a century later.

In 1941, on her way to a Ladies’ Aid Society meeting, Ellet was hit by an automobile and suffered a broken leg. Carried to a local beauty salon after the accident, she mused, “it could have been worse...they might have taken me into a beer parlor.” After a period of decline, Minnie Ellet died on September 18, 1945 at the age of 84. Her last act of local service was to donate her estate to Akron Childrens’ Hospital. She is buried at North Springfield Presbyterian Church Cemetery, where she is forever part of her community and the family for which it was named. She would have settled for nowhere else and nothing less.

## Thank You for Your Patience

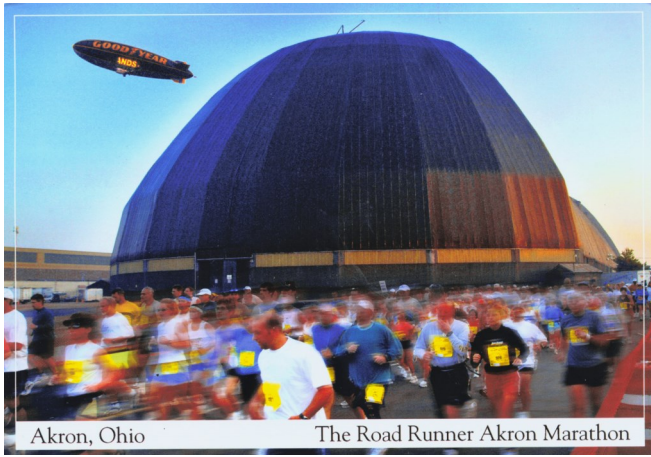
As you all know, 2020 has been a year like no other. Even now, it still feels as though we face the unknown and unpredictable in the months ahead. The Library has navigated many challenges, especially during our temporary closure earlier this year, but thanks to you, we have been able to move forward and remain a steady resource for our researchers. We are so very thankful for your support during this time.

We are doing everything we can to maintain a safe and clean environment in our buildings including mandatory mask-wearing and social distancing. ASCPL will continue to follow state government mandates and guidelines and direction from our administration on all safety protocols. If you are not comfortable coming into a Library building, we are also providing [outside pick-up service](#) at all of our locations. Please call ahead and we will be happy to serve you. Don’t forget that you can use many of our genealogy and local history [databases](#) from any computer remotely, including access to Ancestry Library Edition, which has been extended through December 31. We have also been making more of our genealogy books circulating, so be sure to search our [library catalog](#) for any books you that might interest you. You just may be able to check them out!

Even though much has changed, your Library is still here to serve you, so stay in touch and let us know what you need.







Goodyear Airdock & Marathon, 2003. From Summit Memory.

## “It’s Not Just a Sport. It’s a Social Movement:” A Look at Akron’s Marathons

by Cheri Goldner, Librarian

For as long as I have worked at Main Library, September has been marathon month. The race now known as the FirstEnergy Akron Marathon, Half Marathon & Team Relay marks its eighteenth year this fall and has become quite the Akron institution. However, it is not the first marathon you will read about when searching the *Akron Beacon Journal*. The *Beacon* contains numerous items on the Greater Akron Marathon, which saw more than 400 runners take to the streets of Akron for its inaugural running on Sunday, June 29, 1975. The paper also reported

on the Golden Moccasin Marathon, a race with a “challenging scenic course” through “Akron residential areas and the Metropolitan Park system” and ending at Cascade Plaza that made its debut on October 4, 1980.

While *Beacon* writers and readers at times referred to each of these events as a “marathon,” they were using the term loosely, meaning simply a long distance event rather than the precise 26.2 mile distance that has been the standard marathon since 1921. An ad for the inaugural Greater Akron race clearly shows that the event included race distances of six and twelve miles, while other mentions of the race used the metric ten or 20 kilometers. When the Greater Akron Run returned after a five-year hiatus in 1990, the distances were shortened to 5k and 10k. Like today’s marathon, the race drew some big names in running and raised funds for charity (early events benefited the Summit County Kidney Foundation), but technically, it was not a marathon. The same is true of the Golden Moccasin, which was a 24k or fifteen-mile race.

One local marathon that has always “gone the distance,” the entire 26.2 mile distance, is the Towpath Marathon. Known as the Toe to Tow Marathon from its inaugural running in 1992 through 1997, this race started as one of several events marking the 160<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the completion of the Ohio and Erie Canal and takes place on the Towpath Trail. Until last year, when the park denied the race permit due to ongoing construction, it was the only marathon run inside of a national park and was known for its fall scenery and a fast and flat course.

The race that most of us who live or work in Akron think of when we hear the word “marathon” is a completely different thing. Conceived by Akron businessman Steve Marks after running the Columbus marathon in 1985, the Akron Marathon is known for its high-energy start, stadium finish and a whole lot of crowd support and hills in between. Marks and other organizers went to great lengths to grow excitement and participation in the inaugural event in 2003. They enlisted the help of Olympian Jeff Galloway in developing a training plan and brought decorated middle distance runner and USA Track & Field CEO Craig Masback to speak at the Akron Roundtable (the quote in this article’s title is from his talk). They also had Akron native and Olympic medalist Butch Reynolds sign autographs and lead warmups at the kids’ fun run ([footage](#) available on Summit Memory). The first marathon kicked off from the Goodyear

**GOLDEN MOCCASIN FOOT RACE**

**Akron's first Marathon was a success . . . thanks to you!**

The quality and complexion of a city is its people. They give it life and direction. They can join hands and move it forward. People can join resources and enrich it. The people of Akron are such a team. Hundreds of people and thousands of hours were dedicated to giving life to the dream of holding a marathon race in Akron.

These Don Getz paintings were presented to the overall winners of this year's marathon.

FIRST PLACE—OVERALL WOMEN  
KITTY CONSOLO/KENT

FIRST PLACE—OVERALL MEN  
MALCOLM EAST/PITTSBURG

We'd like to thank and recognize all the volunteers involved.

SPONSORS

Akron Beacon Journal, October 13, 1980.

Airdock on October 11, 2003 with nearly 4,000 participants. While those numbers are small compared to later years, the marathon was a big deal from the start. In fact, in the *Beacon's* 2003 readers' poll on the year's biggest local news stories, it tied for second with the summer flood, trailing only the August 14 blackout and ahead of LeBron James being chosen as first overall pick in the NBA draft.

The Akron Marathon's sponsors and course have changed over the years, but it is always a quality race and community event. Like most races this year, the eighteenth running of the Akron Marathon will be a virtual one. Until we are back on the blue line, we encourage you to read more about the [history](#) of the marathon on the event website and to keep (or start) running. And, should you ever be nearing the finish on race day, look up and give us a wave as you run past the Library on Main Street.

## New Database: America's News

by Barbara Leden, Librarian

Looking for some reliable news, current events or obituaries? Take a look at one of the Library's newest online resources, America's News. This database, which provides access to 3,500 news sources, gives relevant information on a wide variety of popular issues and is free to Library users. Topics in business, health, politics and careers are represented, plus much more. National, regional and local news subjects are covered with multiple perspectives. In addition, current daily editions of Ohio newspapers including the *Akron Beacon Journal*, *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, *Columbus Dispatch* and *Canton Repository* are available.

To access the database whether you're in the Library or at home, visit the Library's [home page](#) and hover over "Research" at the top of the page. Select "Databases by Subject," then "Newspapers" to find America's News. You'll need a valid ASCPL card to log in.

Jump straight to the basic search box

Search for current and trending topics

Quick links to regional news

The home page of this database is divided into several sections. The basic **search box** retrieves data from all sources in the database. The search can be refined by date and location with a clickable U.S. map. The **Suggested Topics** section helps users quickly find information on jobs and careers, education, health, social issues, technology, and other popular and trending subjects. The **Quick Links** section highlights areas of

the database including Special Reports, Hot Topics, and Daily Headlines and Lesson Plans. Further down in the Quick Links section are boxes providing access to popular news sources in the region. The news sources are presented mostly in text or image format with some in video, audio, blog, magazine or web-only format. While most of the information included is from the past couple of years, the earliest dates back to 1978.

From a genealogical point of view, a hidden gem of this database is the ability to access regional newspapers for recent articles and obituaries. Available in various formats and timeframes, mostly within the past ten years, they can provide valuable information to help with your family history research.

Have fun exploring this database that's packed with current and relevant sources!

Thank  
You

## **We would like to thank the following for their generous contributions:**

Akron Chapter DAR for donation toward purchase of books in memory of Nancye Thomas, Helen Weyrick, Patricia Schaffner, and Thelma Ola

Alan Barden for photographs of local church congregations, 1930s-1950s

Kristen Carter-Groulx for *Demi-Tasse and Mrs. Grundy: A Biography and Collection of Stories from 1924-1927 of Author Josephine Van De Grift* by Kristen Carter-Groulx

Kenneth Clarke for *Wolves and Flax: The Prior Family in the Cuyahoga Valley Wilderness* by Kenneth Clarke

Carol Eubank for pamphlets and materials from local Democratic organizations in Summit County

Paul Harvey for historic postcards of Fulton Airport and stationery from the Portage Hotel

David McCann for Westminster Presbyterian Church directories, 1979 and 1984

Jim Merriner for DVD recording of truck tires being built at General Tire, circa 1980

Sharon Moreland Myers for current digital photos of neighborhoods around Akron and Summit County; *The First Hundred Houses in Silver Lake: How Silver Lake was Developed*, *The First Hundred Buildings Still Standing in Cuyahoga Falls*, and *The War of 1812 in Summit County and Northern Ohio: Along with Veterans Buried in Summit County* by Sharon Moreland Myers

Pontius Family Association for *The Bridge Builder*, vols. 1-3

Bev Pylman for envelope and stationery from the Hotel Howe, 1930s

Dan Rees for Goodyear Junior High School yearbooks, 1976, 1978 and Goodyear Middle School yearbooks, 1998, 1999

Lura Shaw Rotruck for *Shaw Footprints: Across a New Continent* by Lura Shaw Rotruck

Russell Sibert for several items including bookmark from The Bookseller; Postal Zone Directory for Akron, 1957; member directory of The Chapel, 1989; official program of NEC World Series of Golf, 1986; *The 43-Day War: History Unfolds on the Pages of the Akron Beacon Journal*; and issues of the *Quaker Chronicle*





Harvest Moon – Tinkers Creek Field by *Joseph D. Jesensky*. From the Artwork of *Joseph Jesensky Collection, Summit Memory*.

The Akron-Summit County Public Library  
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