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CITY OF NILES ~ Press Release

Profiles and Portraits exhibit opening at Niles History Center

NILES, May 17, 2017 – For Immediate Release

On Wednesday, May 25 from 5-7 pm, the Niles History Center will celebrate the opening of a new exhibit, *Profiles and Portraits: African Americans in Niles*. The exhibit and research for the project was sponsored by the Michigan Humanities Council through the Heritage Grant program.

The *Profiles* exhibit highlights fourteen residents who were interviewed by Niles High School students. The residents, all seniors, were selected from families with deep roots in Niles, which, in some cases, predate the Civil War. Among those interviewed were members of the Finley family whose ancestors arrived in Niles via the Underground Railroad in 1850. Stories presented deal with this early history of Niles centered on the Ferry Street and “Dickereel” neighborhoods, and continue through the Depression, World Wars, Civil Rights Movement and up to the present day.

Niles History Center Director Christina Arseneau notes, “This project was an effort to make our history more inclusive, to tell these stories of struggle and triumph while recording them for future generations.”

In addition to the exhibit, the Niles History Center will make available oral history transcripts and further images and information as part of an online exhibit and database with a deeper look into schools, businesses, churches, neighborhoods and families. The database is intended to allow researchers to study the African American history of Niles and its major contribution to the Michigan story.

Several historical buildings which still stand today, including the formerly segregated “Colored” Ferry Street School, will be incorporated into a walking tour of Niles which will take place on May 31 at 10:00. Please call the Niles History Center to register, 269-845-4054.

The reception is free and open to the public and will be held at the Historic Chapin Mansion, 508 E. Main Street. In June, the *Profiles* exhibit will be displayed at the Niles District Library.

For more information, please contact the Niles History Center at 269-845-4054.

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