

**"THE TOWPATH" – JULY, AUGUST, SEPTEMBER – 1988**

THIS NEWSLETTER IS PUBLISHED QUARTERLY BY  
 THE NEW BREMEN HISTORIC ASSOCIATION  
 P.O. Box 73 – New Bremen, Ohio 45869  
 Marjorie Lietz, Editor

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 Donations, either material or monetary, are always welcome!

*"The Towpath"* brings you some history of New Bremen - your article is welcome.

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 11-DUES NOT PAID, CC-COMPLIMENTARY COPY.

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LOOKING NORTH FROM THE WEST BANK OF THE CANAL  
 "LOCK NUMBER ONE "

**SOMETHING NEW ON OUR LABELS**

TO HELP SIMPLIFY MEMBERSHIP DUES AND USE THE NEW TECHNIQUES OF THE COMPUTER, YOU WILL FIND EITHER A NUMBER OR TWO LETTERS IN THE UPPER LEFT HAND CORNER OF YOUR ADDRESS LABEL.

1. THE LETTERS **LM** MEAN YOU ARE A LIFE MEMBER -YOUR DUES ARE PAID (FOR LIFE).
2. THE NUMBER **88** SIGNIFIES YOUR MEMBERSHIP DUES ARE PAID FOR THE YEAR 1988.
3. IF YOU FIND THE NUMBER **11**, THEN OUR RECORDS SHOW YOU ARE NOT CURRENT. IF THERE ARE ANY QUESTIONS OR DIFFERENCE OF OPINION, PLEASE CALL SUSIE HIRSCHFELD (629-2133) OR KARL MESLOH (629-2453).

**THINK CHRISTMAS!** IT IS NOT TOO EARLY TO PLAN YOUR DISPLAY FOR THE CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL AT THE MUSEUM. WE ARE HAPPY TO HAVE SUCH A WONDERFUL TRADITION IN OUR LITTLE TOWN. THE FESTIVAL IS HELD THE FIRST PART OF DECEMBER. OUR THEME THIS YEAR WILL BE "HOLIDAY MAGIC". IT SOUNDS INTERESTING AND CHALLENGING, DOESN'T IT? SO PUT ON YOUR "THINKING CAP" AND BE READY FOR YOUR CHRISTMAS DISPLAY AT THE MUSEUM!



## THE CHAUTAUQUA

“This season, for the first time, this community is to enjoy a program of REDPATH CHAUTAUQUA attractions! From the Dunbar Male Quartet and Bell Ringers on the opening day to the closing day with its JOY NIGHT and children’s pageant, the program is full of interesting surprises. It is known that the Redpath people are making a special effort to please patrons of this circuit and those who are familiar with Chautauqua talent state that the program compares favorably with that which the same company (National Lincoln Chautauqua System) stages in the largest cities in the country.”

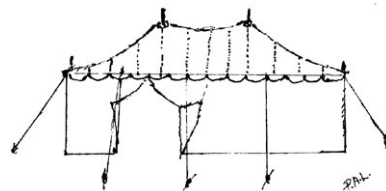
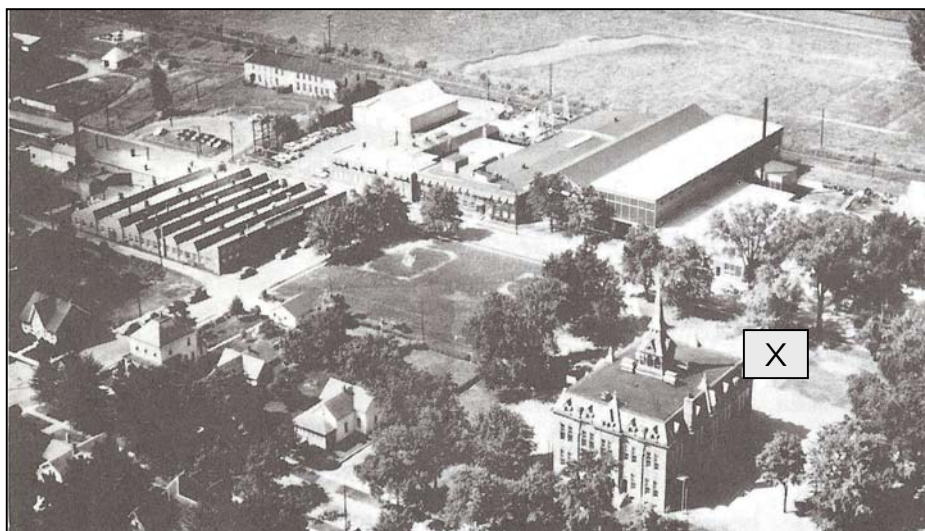
*(New Bremen Sun - May 14, 1920)*

“With the arrival Thursday of Gosnell Layman, first advance man for the Redpath Chautauqua, the outdoor advertising campaign was started and season tickets were placed on sale. Within the next three weeks the long anticipated six day program will be a reality. A junior leader will arrive on Chautauqua's second day to direct games and tell stories for the boys and girls each morning and each afternoon. The children's work will close with an elaborate pageant on Chautauqua's sixth night.”

*(New Bremen Sun - July 16, 1920)*

The Chautauqua was a big event in our lives way back in the "twenties". We are talking about the days before television, and even before the radio was very popular. The Chautauqua was a traveling tent show, bringing the very best of musical and dramatic talent to our little town. "Town fathers" were busy finding lodging for all the stage folks. Some families offered a room or two in their homes to help out the Hotel which was booked "full." Housewives depended on their gardens in order to serve tasty meals to the newcomers in town. Meals had to be on schedule in order to be ready for the afternoon show.

WHERE WAS THE CHAUTAUQUA HELD? On the old school grounds, which is now Stamco's parking lot.



THE "X" MARKS THE SPOT WHERE THE CHAUTAUQUA PITCHED ITS TENT. THE CENTRAL GRADE SCHOOL BUILDING FACED SOUTH FRANKLIN ST. IN THE BACKGROUND IS STAMCO AND THE WATER PLANT.



## THE CHAUTAUQUA – Continued

### YES, WE REMEMBER THE CHAUTAUQUA!

Tent Chautauquas were traveling groups of talented persons that operated in the United States from about 1900-1930. They moved from town to town giving programs of lectures, recitals, concerts, etc. It was a "SHOW ON THE ROAD" so to speak. These programs rated interesting and entertaining. A show lasted about four mid-week days with afternoon and evening performances. Communities responded well in early years, however their popularity decreased with the coming of the radio and the development of other forms of entertainment.

In the summer of 1924, I was personally invited to attend such an afternoon session by a kind neighbor lady. A ladies' quartet, a lecture and a string ensemble comprised this particular session. The program was well rendered and enjoyable to music lovers.

The Chautauqua tent was set up on the grounds of the former New Bremen Central Grade School and the 1920-1930 New Bremen High School. This community performance we keep as a memory and a reflection of the past which is now history.

*[by Amelia Conradi]*

Let me tell you what I remember about the summer Chautauqua programs. I do remember that the tent covered the whole west side of the schoolgrounds. I attended the program with my High School friend and had fun. I also remember we had to get all the work caught up the week before, for Mama enjoyed the Chautauqua a lot! She was a very civic-minded person - so loyal to the town! The "talent" (as it was called) was about the same kind that the "lecture course" at the Opera House had in the winter - some quite good. I also remember seeing a snapshot in someone's photo album which was taken from the upstairs of the school building, as the people were leaving an afternoon program. Many of the ladies were carrying black umbrellas as a protection against the sun. (Suntans were not fashionable then!)

ALSO, I must tell you that Dick Kunning of New Bremen got himself a job as a tent-boy! During the six months between the time he got out of the army (W.W.I) and enrolled at Ohio State, he had to take care of the shipping and taking down and putting up of tents. He started out in Louisiana in January and worked his way through the southern states until the next fall. He talked about it a lot for it was a very interesting experience for a 21-year-old! He was able to save a lot of his salary because he slept in the tent. He had to round up the men to help with the tents at every stop, and load the tents on the flat cars so they could travel to the next place.

*[Marguerite (Koop) Kunning]*



In 1922 a season ticket to the Chautauqua was \$2.00 for adults and \$1.00 for juniors. The tickets were exempt from the 10% war tax. During the research on "Chautauqua", I found that Miss Emma Kohler, a former music teacher in the New Bremen Schools, at one time traveled with the C. Albert Chautauqua. Howard Hoffman, a former New Bremen boy, traveled with the Swarthmore Chautauqua Association and was well known for his dramatics.

In 1923, President Harding gave the Chautauqua a fine endorsement. He at one time was a Redpath lecturer. QUOTE: "Chautauqua has served to reveal the individual American community to itself at its best. It has been a voluntary, inspirational service in which men and women have given the best they have in them for the sake of the social interest."

#### HOWARD HOFFMAN

WELL KNOWN IN MUSICAL  
AND DRAMATIC CIRCLES.



You are invited to the

**Firemen's Picnic**  
to be held at the

**CITY PARK**

Wednesday, June 20

**100 PRIZES Given Away!**

The City Band will render the music. Refreshments of various kinds and sandwiches will be served.

**Various Amusements.**

Everybody Welcome

**New Bremen Vol. Fire Co.**

### "HATS OFF TO OUR VOLUNTEER FIREMEN OF NEW BREMEN !"

Local merchants have responded wonderfully to the appeal of the volunteer fire companies for support at the annual firemen's picnic at the city park on Wednesday evening, June 20th, and have contributed freely to the firemen's fund. Some have given of their merchandise while others have made donations. The merchandise will be disposed of on the evening of the picnic. A complete list of the contributors and contributions was listed (below) in the *New Bremen Sun*.

### IN THE YEAR 1923

Where was the City Park? Now, in 1988, it is known as St. Paul parking lot, behind the Bank and Post Office.



In 1923, there was no trouble finding a place to park at the picnic grounds, because there were fewer cars and most everyone walked to this event. Tall trees outlined the park, there were plenty of places to sit and visit and best of all, ice cream cones and strawberry pop was a real treat for "kids" in the twenties.

Folks gathered 'round the band stand to hear the music and when GEORGE GOBRECHT AND HIS BAND started to play "Alexander's Ragtime Band", then you knew the picnic had started! There were plenty of prizes, and one year my mother won an electric iron. It was shiny and heavy and we were so proud of it - although it sat on the shelf for over 5 years because we did not have electricity! Now, 65 years later, we still look forward to the Firemen's Picnic. It is a real hometown event and one we like to support.

[by Marge Lietz]

### CONTRIBUTED WILLINGLY TO FIREMEN

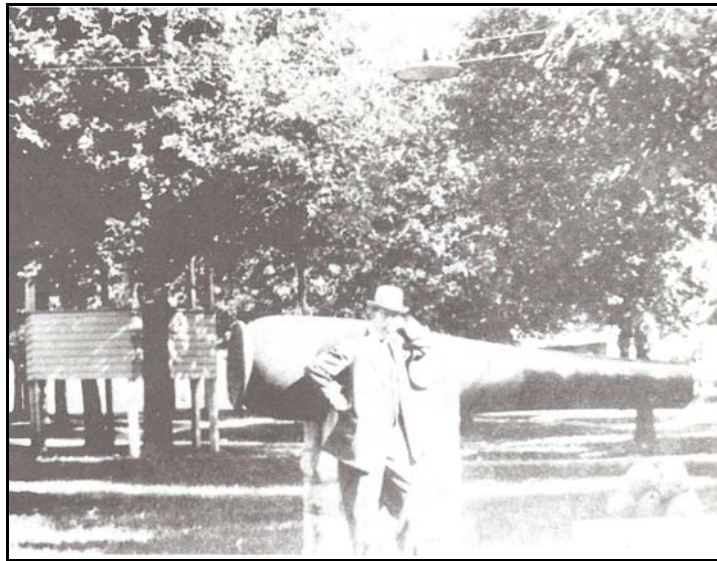
Local merchants have responded wonderfully to the appeal of the volunteer fire companies for support of the annual firemen's picnic at the city park on Wednesday evening, June 20th, and have contributed freely to the firemen's fund. Some have given of their merchandise while others have made cash donations. The merchandise will be disposed of on the evening of the picnic. A complete list of the contributors and contributions follows:

Kuenzel Mills Co. ----- (bbl. flour)  
Kuenzel Mills Co. ----- (pr. all-wool blankets)  
White Mountain Creamery (25# creamery butter)  
Auglaize Furniture Co. -(kitchen table/ironing board)  
Arcade ----- (\$10 purchase order)  
First Nat. Bank ----- (\$5.00 gold pc.)  
First City Bank ----- (\$5.00 cash)  
Streine Tool & Mfg. ----- (\$5.00)  
Aug. Hoist & Body Co. ----- (\$5.00)  
N.B. Bridge Co. ----- (\$5.00 cash)  
New Bremen Broom Co. ----- (½ doz. brooms)  
J.H. Grothaus ----- (double shovel plow)  
Klanke & Co. ----- (book blocks)  
J. Halsema ----- (clock)  
N.B. Hdwe. & Supply Co. --- (aluminum ware - \$2.50)  
Lewis Poppe ----- (\$1.75 trade)  
A.H. Albert ----- (flower basket)  
Advance Auto & Implement ----- (stop light)  
Wm. Schelper ----- (\$3.00 bacon)  
Loy-Ludwig Music Co. -- (piano roll or phono. record)  
Knost Shoe Store ----- (\$3.00 trade)  
Schulenberg Brothers -- (canned heat cooking outfit)  
Patterson & Wissman --- (1 bottle hair dresser)

Laut Brothers ----- (cigar case)  
F.B. Hollingsworth ----- (\$2.00 cash)  
August Dierker ----- (enamel coffee can)  
Dr. F.F. Fledderjohann ----- (\$2.00)  
Huenke Garage ----- (motor meter)  
E.H. Nieter ----- (10# coffee)  
A.J. Friemering ----- (basket of groceries)  
Mueller Bros. ----- (traveling bag)  
Jake Fritz ----- (\$2.00 cash)  
Melville Laut ----- (alarm clock)  
Erhardt Dry Goods Store -- (bungalow apon/girdlers)  
N.B. Auto Livery ----- (1 set spark plugs)  
Leo Kuhlhorst ----- (\$1.00 cash)  
Herm. Blanke ----- (\$1.00 milk tkts.)  
Ben Brockman ----- (\$1.00 cash)  
Herman Heinfeld ----- (\$1.00 cash)  
Wyen & Stueve ----- (\$2.00 cash)  
Tony Schwieterman ----- (\$1.00)  
J.W. Lanfersieck ----- (bottle face cream)  
Home Bakery ----- (3 cakes)  
Ernest Tomhafe ----- (bottle hair dresser)  
Kellermeyer & Rabe ----- (pair house slippers)  
Dr. Vordermark ----- (\$1.00 cash)  
Dr. Briggs ----- (\$1.00 cash)  
Rabe Mfg. Co. ----- (40 bundles kindling)  
Dr. Stappe ----- (inner tube)  
Dr. Everist ----- (\$1.00 cash)  
Ernst Eschmeyer ----- (1 rug)  
Ivan Koeper ----- (soles & heels)  
Wm. Combs ----- (2 boxes beverage)  
Henry Schwaberow ----- (aluminum tea kettle)  
Superior Broom Co. ----- (½ doz. brooms)  
Henry Block (nickle-plated) --- (tumbler holder)  
Jerry Dietrich ----- (\$1.50 cash)  
Chas. Block ----- (case beverage)

James Taylor ----- (½ doz. photos)  
Heitman Brothers ----- (double socket twin-lite)  
Home Printing Co. (1 yr. subscription to SUN)  
J.A. Long Co. ----- (2 fowls)  
Gast Implement Co. --- (2 - \$1.25 spark plugs)  
The Rabe Mfg. Co. ----- (electric sad iron)  
H.J. Laut ----- (box cigars)  
R. Busse Meat Market ----- (ham)  
Ferd Wint ----- (box cigars)  
J.M. Brucken ----- (box cigars)  
Mrs. Haines ----- (\$3.00 purch. order)  
Blase & Gieseke ----- (basket groceries)  
Theo. Doenges ----- (inner tube)  
Lilly White Oil Co. ----- (5# cup grease)  
H.W. Rairdon ----- (\$3 pur. order)  
U.J. Schwieterman ----- (traveler's set)  
Dr. H.J. Rawers ----- (\$2 cash)  
F.P. Jung ----- (whip)  
Burden & Solms ----- (load wood)





FROM THE PAGES OF "YESTERYEAR"  
THE OLD CITY PARK ON NORTH FRANKLIN ST.  
NOTE THE BAND STAND, THE CANNON,  
THE PILE OF CANNON BALLS AND THE OVERHEAD STREET LIGHT.

A SPECIAL THANK YOU to those who responded to our plea for artificial Christmas Trees to use at our Christmas Tree Festival in December! We could still use a few more so if you have an extra tree you are not using and are willing to donate it to the museum, please call Carol Stauffer at 629-3334.



Membership in the New Bremen Historic Association is open to all persons interested in the history of New Bremen and the surrounding area. Membership is \$2.00 per person (Annual) and a Life Membership is \$50.00. Your dues support the publication of this newsletter, "*The Towpath*".



The New Bremen Historical Museum is open during the summer months on Sunday afternoons from 1:00 to 4:00 P.M. Stop in and visit - you are welcome! Anna Mae Hudson has a fantastic display of "Old Hats" which I am sure you will enjoy.

HELP! Mrs. Merlin (Mary Ellen) Ahlers is researching New Bremen news articles of "yesterday", hoping to find the names of the medical doctors who practiced their profession here in New Bremen - also, the years they resided here in our town. If you have any history that you feel would be a help to her, please call her at 629-3292 (303 South Walnut, NBO).



DON'T THROW IT AWAY! When you are cleaning your attic or storage area and find old articles you have no use for - or perhaps a box of old pictures of persons you do not know, call one of the Historic Association Trustees to check the items before you throw it out. "Yesterday's articles are tomorrow's antiques."

ANOTHER BIG THANK YOU! This edition of "*THE TOWPATH*" was made possible through the gifts of two of our Life Members, namely Mrs. Marguerite Künning and Mr. Mervin Niekamp. Some years ago, Mrs. Künning of Dayton, OH and Mr. Niekamp of Burbank, CA lived and went to school here in New Bremen.

# OTTO FRIEDRICH MESLOH

by Karl R. Mesloh, great-nephew



The village of New Bremen has been the home of many fine musicians. One of the finest was Otto Friedrich Mesloh, born February 26, 1867, son of John Henry and Wilhelmina (Boesel) Mesloh. Although a machinist by trade, his love of music won out and Otto became a professional musician.

Otto excelled in both the cornet and flute and also played the saxophone and piccolo. As a cornetist, Otto was unique – he could walk up to a cornet suspended by a string and immediately hit “C” in altissimo (which is the highest practical note for the cornet) by simply touching the mouthpiece of the suspended cornet with his lips (brass players will know the extreme difficulty of such a feat). Otto could also sustain a single note or a trill for upwards of 3-5 minutes by a system of reserving breath while inhaling. In fact, several newspapers reported that even the audiences themselves would “gasp for breath”, fearing that Otto would completely exhaust himself while maintaining a long trill in the “Carnival of Venice” cornet solo.

Locally, Otto played with “The Big Six” of Springfield, Ohio and in Dayton. He traveled with the Waite Comedy Co., Bubb and Bennett and Waite’s Western Co. Otto then moved to Boston and played the Park Theatre for two years. In 1898, he joined John Phillip Sousa’s band as solo cornetist and was Sousa’s leading soloist for three years. With Sousa, he toured extensively all over the country, touching every state in the Union. Local cities in which performances were given included Dayton, Fort Wayne, Toledo, Cincinnati, Columbus, Zanesville, Cleveland, Chillicothe, Portsmouth and Marietta.

Otto also played in various other military bands – Howson’s, the renowned 69th Regiment Band, Callahan’s New York Marine Band, the British Guards Band and Somerset’s Military Band. Performances given during these years included open air concerts in the numerous well-known parks of New York City as well as presentations in Herald Square Theatre, Grand Central Palace, Carnegie Hall and the Metropolitan Opera House.

Otto next became the celebrated member of the “Elite Musical Four”, reported in the “Atlantic City Review” as being the best and greatest musical team in vaudeville. It was a very popular group, which presented all four musicians playing selections on cornets, saxophones, xylophones or flugelhorns. While the “Elite Musical Four” were returning home to New York City on June 11, 1906, following an engagement in Atlantic City, the Jersey Flyer of the Central Railroad of New Jersey hit an open switch while traveling at 60 mph and derailed. The brakeman of the freight train, which had been shunted to a siding to let the express pass, had unfortunately not re-closed the switch, causing the derailment.

Otto’s seatmate, George Van Duzen, manager of the “Elite Four”, was thrown through the open window beside him headfirst into the marsh, suffocating in the mud. Otto nearly suffered the same fate and although pinned beneath the smoker baggage car, he was able to slightly move his head, forming a small cavity in the mire which permitted him to blow some of the mud from his nostrils and breathe sufficiently until rescuers chopped through the car pinning him.

## Otto Mesloh – Continued

Although believed (and reported) to be mortally injured, having suffered numerous head, chest and internal injuries, he did survive. It was next feared that Otto might never play again as a result of broken facial bones and a severely injured jaw, but he did recover and did play again.

Following a lengthy convalescence, Otto began playing once more in 1908, accepting limited engagements and teaching a private clientele of students. He next played in operatic orchestras for a number of the better-known operas (Aida, Carmen, Bal Masque, Otello, Il Travatore, La Boehme, La Traviata, Lucia d'Lammermoor, Mephistopheles) mainly performing in the cities of New York, Boston and Philadelphia. He also toured with the Jacinta Opera Co. which performed in Washington, D.C., Baltimore and the New England states. Later he played in theatre orchestras in the Liberty, Knickerbocker, Gotham, Bronx, Amsterdam, New York, Daley, Imperial Lyceum, and Broadway theatres, to name a few. Theatres played other than New York City ranged from the resort cities of New Jersey and northward along the coast to Halifax, Nova Scotia and Toronto, Canada.

Otto was a jovial, fun-loving individual with a keen sense of humor. He remained a bachelor and was devoted to his parents, sisters and brothers. On his annual visits home, the Mesloh homestead reportedly “rang eloquent with melody” as his mother, Wilhelmina, and sisters, Emma and Dora, were also musicians (pianists). “Harmony prevails and with it, of course, bright cheer in the most generous measure when the musical chords are set in vibration.” On such a visit home, Otto played the cornet solo “The Lost Chord” to a packed Boesel Opera House for New Bremen’s April 12, 1912 “Home Concert”.

The train accident took its toll, however, as Otto’s health began failing following the accident. He passed away June 28, 1923 at the age of 56. Funeral services were held at his New Bremen home at 19 South Herman Street. Burial was in the family plot in German Protestant Cemetery. A young life and brilliant musical career had an untimely ending.

[The author appreciates the information received from Otto’s nieces, Louise (Henning) Laut and Margaret (Henning) Boecker, and from nephew, Karl Mesloh, Sr., as well as that of Mrs. Robert Ellis, Ed Quellhorst and Virgil Horn.]

Karl R. Mesloh

**EDITOR’S NOTE:** Otto Mesloh’s cornet was sold to Aaron Vogelsang, brother to Mrs. Robert Ellis and Mrs. Frank Quellhorst. It is now on display at the N.B.H.A. museum.