THIS NEWSLETTER IS
PUBLISHED QUARTERLY

Membership Dues:
$3.00 per year
Life Membership $50.00

Regular visiting hours:
Sunday afternoons - June, July, August
2:00 – 4:00 p.m.

SLATE OF OFFICERS & TRUSTEES
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(95) Mark Gaerke ..................... Vice Pres.
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(95) Betty Schroer .................... Treasurer
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(97)(vacant) ................................. Trustee
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Irene Wellemeyer ... Corresponding Secy.
Lois Moeller ................................ Historian
Vernita Scheer........................ Co-Curator
Bea Young............................... Co-Curator
Susie Hirschfeld.................... Membership
Mary Wint ................................ Genealogy
Marjorie Lietz...................... "Towpath" Editor

ANNUAL DINNER MEETING
The Annual Dinner Meeting of the N.B.H.A. was held March 21, 1994 with 65 members and guests present. The tables in the dining room at Zion’s Church were decorated with lovely baskets of spring flower arrangements made by Paul and Viola Headapohl.

Zion’s “Happy Cookers” prepared a tasty meal of steak, mashed potatoes, salad bar and dessert bar. The meal was delicious.

President Lawrence Holmer gave the welcome and prayer. He thanked Paul Lietz and Clarence Lesher for the work they did on the Museum stairs. He announced that there are 3 vacant Trustee positions – one for a 2-year term and 2 for a 3-year term.

The evening’s program was presented by James R. Bowsher of Wapakoneta, who spoke on “German Superstitions in Auglaize County”.

NOTECARDS / PRINTS FOR SALE:
The N.B.H.A. has notecards and also prints for framing – all featuring buildings of early New Bremen. Some new prints have been added to the above of early buildings in our town, now renovated. The artist is Mark Gaerke. Notecards may be purchased at the Cornerstone Shop and prints can be framed at the Artist’s Touch.

NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS

12/12/1916: New Bremen Postmaster, Lafe W. Kunnng, entertained no less than 15 of Uncle Sam’s servants at a royal banquet given in the Hollingsworth Hotel. There were postmasters from the Fourth Congressional District. A Victrola furnished by the Hotel added additional pleasure to the get-together while the victuals served at the banquet were simply excellent.

June 1923: Beginning next Monday, July 2, 1923, New Bremen will for the first time in the history of the town, experience free mail delivery within the confines of the municipality.

During J.H. Goekes’s term as congressman from the 4th district, an effort was made to secure free mail delivery for New Bremen, but the effort failed to materialize. During Ben Welty’s term, more attention was given to the Miami & Erie barge canal project, which at the time was thought to be of greater benefit to our hamlet. However, John Cable sees more honor and political prestige in securing free mail delivery for New Bremen’s Post Office patrons – hence FREE DELIVERY with FRANK BUCKLOH at the helm!

Deliveries of mail will be made to New Bremen residents at 7:30 A.M. and 3:30 P.M., depending on the volume of mail to be handled. Postmaster Kuck fears that the burden will prove too heavy for one man and after a month or two, a second carrier will become a necessity.
NEW BREMEN POST OFFICE

AUGLAIZE COUNTY, OHIO
(Originally established in MERCER COUNTY)

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Changed to AUGLAIZE COUNTY in 1849

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Historian
Corporate Information Services
United States Postal Service
June 28, 1993

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**5TH GRADE GIRLS– 1927-1928**
BACK: Dottie Schmidt, Mabel Moeller, Hazel Wittenbrink, Gladysadell Schwieterman, Betty Weinberg, Louise Waterman, Helen Kellermeyer.

FRONT: Ethel Ahlers, Lola Fischbach, Margaret Ruedebusch, Mildred Roediger, Marjorie Gieseke, Mary Belle Block, Mary Louise Wissman.

**5TH GRADE BOYS– 1927-1928**


**SCHOOL DAYS, SCHOOL DAYS, DEAR OLD GOLDEN RULE DAYS!**
There is no better way to introduce you to the many residents of our town over the years than through a school picture. In September 1923, this class of boys and girls started their education in the old Central Grade School building located on South Franklin St. (now Stamco’s parking lot).

The Class of ’35 has always been a close-knit class and when we have a class reunion every 5 or 10 years, it is as if we have never been apart!

Radios, airplanes, television, World War II, the big depression, New Bremen’s train and streetcar, the renovation of our hometown – they all belong to us. We are also part of the NOTCH children of the Social Security program. Most of this class stayed in New Bremen after graduation or in the New Bremen area. They found jobs, bought or built homes, and raised their families here.

Our Thank You goes to Mrs. Paul (Pauline Vornholt) Gilberg, our 5th grade teacher, who took these pictures when we were in her class the years of 1927-1928. She took them from her album the other day and thought it would be good material for “The Towpath”.

**ANOTHER NEWSPAPER CLIPPING:**

**11/21/1941:** John Zahn, well known farmer and businessman residing in German Township, has been appointed a member of the Local Draft Board for Auglaize County to succeed Julius Woehrmyer of Minster who resigned. Recommending Committee composed of Judge W.T. Copeland, Judge Harry Wittenbrink, and County Auditor, Harold Katterhenry.

The remaining members of the Draft Board are Roy E. Layton, chairman; F.F. Eversman of New Knoxville; Albert M. Koch, Mayor of St. Marys; and Ernest C. Weygardt, Waynesfield undertaker. Board meets every Tuesday.

[Clippings furnished by Vernon Doenges, Wapakoneta.]

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THE NEW BREMEN SPEEDWAY RIOT

by Robert Schroeder

[With special thanks to Alice Schmidt Wissman and Ralph Dietrich]

New Bremen made the national news on September 20, 1931. Lowell Thomas himself told on the radio of the arson-riot that destroyed New Bremen's auto speedway, dramatically ending its dominance in regional dirt-track racing.

That day's races had progressed routinely, and nine cars were lined up to begin the fourth and final race. But a dispute over the size of the purse broke out, delaying the start of the race. No one had remembered to turn off the public address system, so the spectators could hear from the judges' stand the increasingly vehement arguing between the race car owners and the speedway management.

Some spectators joined the drivers and pit crews in besieging the judges' stand, then starting to rock it dangerously. Abruptly, the drivers broke away, huddled, then scurried to take up positions in the grandstand, strategically spacing themselves across its expanse. The drivers then initiated and cheer-led the insistent chant, "Start the race! Start the race!"

Mauri Rose - later to become famous as an Indianapolis 500 winner - threw the first pop bottle. I know this because I was sitting about seven rows down from his perch. In simultaneous response to his signal, the other drivers in the stands hurled their pop bottles, whereupon the spectators gleefully joined in. Arcing bottles canopied the stands.

In a seeming instant, the orderly rows of spectators had become a rioting mob. As the disputants fled from the judges' stand, the milling crowd toppled it, then set its rubble on fire with pit crew gasoline. Reacting to this cue, ringleaders began ripping bench boards from the stands, piling them into pyres, and setting them ablaze.

I was in a front-row box seat, my father being one of the speedway owners. Somehow, I found a piece of pipe, and advanced toward the nearest pyre-lighters, intending to keep them from burning "our" grandstand. I was astounded to find myself halted by a deputy sheriff. "Stop them, don't stop me!" I demanded. "I can't stop them" he replied, "but I can stop you from getting yourself killed!" He wrested the pipe from my hand, and propelled me toward an exit.

Now on the lam, I risked my next peek at the ongoing melee from the far end of the flaming grandstand, its fiery, red timbers now twisting and collapsing into smoldering embers. Turning the tables on those who had incited the rioting, the crazed crowd was now readying to tip the race cars over and burn them too. The frantic crews were ramming their racers onto their trailers, and then improvising wheel-spinning escapes from the milling mob.

It was at this point that Harry Schroeder, my father, found me and hurried me off to his car. On race days he was in charge of the ticket booths and the cash, while his partners, Leonard (Doc) Schmidt and Leo Huenke, my uncle, managed track operations. Having removed and secured the ticket money at the first sign of trouble, Dad was now afraid the rioters would track the owners to their homes in town, and so he drove my mother, my sisters and me around neighboring towns until long after dark, when finally we ventured home. Our house had not been molested, nor had the other owners'.
Of the speedway's three proprietors, gregarious and hearty Doc Schmidt had established the most rapport with the drivers, many of whom would stop off at the Schmidt residence after the races for a friendly chat and refreshments. But Doc was a veterinarian and ironically was prevented by a hog cholera epidemic from being at the speedway on the day of the riot.

So Leo Huenke was left to contend with the racers' insurrection, brought on because the speedway's contract had quoted a reduced purse for this day's featured race. The racing crews had shown up anyhow, intending to stage a sit-down strike to force the prize money back up. Uncle Leo found himself in a can't-win situation. The strikers rebuked Leo both because he represented the speedway management, and because he himself was a race car owner who wasn't siding with his fellow racers (Leo's Dodge "B-4" competed for the purse). Doc Schmidt believed that had he been at the track that day, the rampage would not have occurred.

The riot marked the end of an era. During the late 1920s and until that fated day in 1931, New Bremen race days drew fans from afar. Festive locals lined porches along Washington, Main and Monroe streets, awed at the bumper-to-bumper stream of out-of-town autos parading to and from the speedway.

Townpeople took pride in New Bremen's claim to fame. When rain had made the dirt track too muddy for racing, the call would go out at dawn, and citizens would turn out en masse with their cars, circling and circling the track hour after hour to drive it dry. No one turned in a bill.

It all began in 1926 as an added attraction at the annual Farmers' Picnic at Kuenning's Grove. As Ralph Dietrich remembers, "The cornfield behind the woods, grown to August height, was sacrificed for the race. A half-mile track was paced through the cornfield to break a path. Corn was damaged only to the extent needed for the racing. Spectators couldn't see the six race cars when they were on the backstretch because the corn was too tall."

Despite the initial compromises, the racing met with enthusiastic response, and expanded to outlive and supplant the Farmers' Picnic. In a territory including half of Ohio and half of Indiana, only Funk's Speedway in Winchester, Indiana and the New Bremen Speedway existed to serve the enthusiasts' appetite for the thrills and spills of dirt-track car racing.

There were later attempts to return the New Bremen track to its glory days. Franklin Dicke, Frank Topp, John Kemper of Dayton, and Earl Baltes of Eldora tried. But times had changed. Many more tracks featuring more specialized racing categories were competing for a diminishing audience.

At the time of the Speedway riot, I was 13½ years old, awaiting my freshman year at New Bremen High. I was angry that a fun part of my life, and the town's, had been maliciously destroyed. And I was amazed that law and order had simply evaporated in the heat of that irrationality. And, most of all, I was shocked at seeing ordinarily meek, compliant townpeople embrace the madness of mob frenzy, only to return unabashed to their meekness and mildness the following day.

Sixty-two years later, I have come to realize the lasting effect the Speedway riot has had on my outlook on life, and on the tone of my playwriting. That triumph of irrationality over reason in 1931 prepared me for the rest of the Twentieth Century.
THE BUCKEYE BOYS OF NEW BREMEN, OHIO
by Herbert E. Kellermeyer, Jr.

In the year of 1926, as I remember, four men from New Bremen decided to take a trip to Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming, these four men being Ervin "Butch" Heinfeld, Gus Ruedebusch, Emil Kuenning and Ed Schafer. So, as I write this article, I'll be referring to Ed Schaefer as my Uncle Ed, for he was the man that held me at baptism and was awful dear to me all my life! Also I'll be talking of Earl, son of Emil Kuenning.

One day, I brought the pictures of the motor home the foursome had built with me to the Hotel Bar and showed them to Earl. He started to laugh and told me what he remembered of their trip.

The first thing the four men decided on was to build a motor home. Earl, being in the car business let the men build the home on the second floor of the Advance Auto building. (The Advance Auto building still stands east of the railroad track on Monroe Street in New Bremen.) Earl also told me in those days new cars were shipped by railroad in pieces and put together on the second floor and then taken down after they were assembled to the first floor by elevator. Earl said he had sold the four men a Model T Ford Truck.

The motor home was built under the supervision of Uncle Ed, for he was a carpenter by trade around New Bremen. I'm very sure he also designed it. So, according to Earl, after they had the motor home completed, the four men shoved it on the elevator, only to find out they had made a measuring error and it was too long to get it down the elevator. So, the men had to saw twelve inches off of the back and assemble that end again. Earl mentioned "In the evening they were carrying lumber up the elevator and you could hear the sawing and pounding going on upstairs."

I'll try to describe the motor home to you. The front wheels had very narrow tires. I think they were known as 3½" clincher tires with no brakes. The back wheels were much larger which could be expected, for it was meant to be a truck. I don't know the size of the back wheels. They carried two spare tires, one small one for the front wheels and the larger size for the back wheels. They had the two tires strapped on the outside of the motor home. The home was built mostly of 2x4s for the frame and 4x4s under the flooring. The siding was regular house siding with two windows on each side with sliding screens on them. The windows were regular glass, not shatterproof. In the back was a small door that would swing out and a screen door that would swing in, very modern in those days. Inside, they had made four bunk beds out of 2x4 frame and the bottom was burlap. Their beds would swing up when they were traveling during the daytime.

For their furniture, they had a small table, four kitchen chairs to sit on when they would eat their meals for they did mostly their own cooking, a coal oil stove that stood behind the front seat. Along the walls were pots, pans and skillets hanging from nails driven into the wall. Also, they had built cupboards and shelves. In one corner stood Uncle Ed's double barrel shotgun - just in case! Sure sounded exciting to me.

Earl told me they didn't have anything fastened to the floor, so when they would stop, things would slide forward for them. Finally the time came for them to get started on their trip out West! I remember them stopping at our house a little while to show their motor home to us and while I was in it, Uncle Ed let a bed down and let me climb in it. They also showed us the things they were taking along for their trip. Then they took off for Chicago, their first destination!

When they got to Chicago, their truck was not performing too well and they were told by someone there they had too big a load for the truck, so they sawed off another twelve inches and replaced the back end for the second time!

Earl told me that they carried a roll of brake bands with them. Every other day, they would replace the bands on the rear wheels and sometimes when they were in hilly ground, they would have to replace them every day! Uncle Ed said the roads out West at that time were pretty much dirt roads and when it rained they would get so muddy, they would have to wait until it would dry off a little.

For food they did their own cooking on the coal oil stove, stopping at farm houses along the way, buying eggs, potatoes, homemade bread and chickens which they dressed themselves. The people they came in contact with were very friendly and willing to help them out. The people also wanted to know about Ohio and where they intended to go.

As I recall, they didn't make Yellowstone Park with their motor home, for the hills got so steep they couldn't get up them and the motor was needing repair. They got as far as Colorado Springs where they found a mechanic who overhauled the motor for them. He replaced the rings and did other repairs it
needed. Earl said his Dad said at this time they were carrying oil by buckets full. This repair on the motor took about 5 or 6 days. The foursome at that time hired a limousine to take them up Pike's Peak and then on to Yellowstone, which took 5 or 6 days.

I'll always remember some of the pictures they brought back with them of the Old Faithful geyser and the waterfalls in the Yellowstone River and other scenic places. Uncle Ed told that when they would stay in cabins in the park, the bears would come up to the camps and go through the garbage cans!

After their return to Colorado Springs, they started back in their motor home through the states, stopping in Nebraska to visit Emil Kuenning's relatives. Uncle Ed talked about Kansas, a state they went through going out West, where they saw jackrabbits and cattle ranches.

Of the four men, two were able to drive a car. I know one of them was Emil Kuenning, the other I believe was Butch Heinfeld. I know it wasn't Uncle Ed, for he didn't learn to drive a car until 1928, when my brother Vernon taught him how to drive. Emil, being a more experienced driver, drove through the towns and cities and Butch drove in the country, where there was very little traffic. Of the trip the foursome made, I believe it took them 7 to 8 weeks.

After several years the motor home was kept in a barn at the north end of Water Street in New Bremen. Later on, the home was moved to Henry Koehn's landing, where they would spend weekends in the summer. After all interest was lost and the home needed repair, it was burned and the iron was salvaged and sold.

In my life, I always said Yellowstone was one place I wanted to go when I grew up! Being married in 1948 to Leota Roettger, two years later (in 1950), my wife and I took a trip to California to see my brother Paul and his wife.

We made it our business to go through Yellowstone to see that part of the country. I also said if we ever have a family, I wanted them to see Yellowstone so in 1966 we took our daughter Nancy and son Dennis to Yellowstone! We traveled in a station wagon and carried a pup tent and mattress in the back of the station wagon.

I would like to know if anybody else has any pictures of the motor home I've been writing about or perhaps a picture of another motor home from those years. I feel it surely must have been the first motor home around here - maybe it was the first one in Auglaize County or even the State of Ohio!


The author: Herbert E. Kellermeyer, Jr.

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