

THE TOWPATH

Published quarterly

January-April-July-October

THE NEW BREMEN HISTORIC ASSOCIATION

April 2013



NEW BREMEN HISTORIC ASSOCIATION HELD ANNUAL DINNER MEETING

The New Bremen Historic Association's 2013 dinner meeting was held March 18 in the fellowship hall of the Holy Redeemer Church. A delicious meal was catered by Speedway Lanes. Susan Krieg, owner of the Pie Shell Bakery, prepared the tasty dessert.

Dinner was followed by the annual business meeting. President Larry Dicke introduced the Trustees and other Board members and gave a progress report on the renovations to the Museum. Treasurer Dennis Dicke reported on the cost of the renovations and generous donations made by Association members. Max Fledderjohann and Dennis Dicke were reelected to serve another term as Trustees. A special thank you was given to Tom Braun who has decided to step down from the Board. We were glad to hear that he will continue to provide his services as our Genealogist. Members were then asked to consider becoming a Trustee to fill two openings on the Board.

The guest speaker for the evening was Gary Stueve. A teacher and coach in the New Bremen Schools for more than 30 years, and now retired, he is the son of Paul and Margaret (Bruggeman) Stueve and grandson of John and Stella (Busse) Stueve.

Well known for his ability to tell stories, Gary entertained the crowd of 160 with an interesting variety of tales. Thank you, Gary for sharing your wonderful stories!



Gary Stueve was Guest Speaker



Annual Dinner Meeting

“THE TOWPATH” is a historical reflection of New Bremen and the surrounding area published quarterly by the New Bremen Historic Association. We welcome stories, pictures and suggestions of topics from our readers.

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Board meetings are held the first Tuesday of each month

Membership Dues

\$25.00 per year (includes spouse/S.O.)

Lifetime membership - \$250.00 (includes spouse/S.O)

Payment is required by January of each year to assure uninterrupted delivery of The Towpath

All levels of membership receive “The Towpath”

New Bremen Historic Association

New Bremen, OH 45869-0073

2012 Annual Financial Report

INCOME:

| | |
|---|--------------------|
| <u>Auglaize County Grant</u> | <u>\$594.00</u> |
| <u>Christmas Tree Voting</u> | <u>20.00</u> |
| <u>Donations</u> | <u>24,149.50</u> |
| <u>Historic Association Annual Dinner</u> | <u>2,280.00</u> |
| <u>Life Membership-New</u> | <u>1,500.00</u> |
| <u>Membership Dues</u> | <u>5,905.00</u> |
| <u>Memorials</u> | <u>1,275.00</u> |
| <u>Miscellaneous</u> | <u>2,577.35</u> |
| <u>Pumpkinfest</u> | <u>652.00</u> |
| <u>Refund</u> | <u>1.03</u> |
| <u>Sales (books)</u> | <u>626.50</u> |
| <u>Start Up Cash Return</u> | <u>400.00</u> |
| <u>Total</u> | <u>\$39,980.38</u> |

EXPENSES:

| | |
|--|--------------------|
| <u>Dues, MECCA & Chamber</u> | <u>136.00</u> |
| <u>Grounds</u> | <u>581.55</u> |
| <u>Historic Association Annual Dinner</u> | <u>1,620.00</u> |
| <u>Historic Museum</u> | <u>42,030.53</u> |
| <u>Insurance</u> | <u>773.00</u> |
| <u>Lockkeeper’s House Cabinets/furniture</u> | <u>69.94</u> |
| <u>Misc. Expenses</u> | <u>496.70</u> |
| <u>Postage</u> | <u>221.80</u> |
| <u>Pumpkinfest</u> | <u>226.23</u> |
| <u>Start Up Cash</u> | <u>400.00</u> |
| <u>Taxes</u> | <u>67.05</u> |
| <u>Towpath Mailing</u> | <u>967.31</u> |
| <u>Towpath Printing</u> | <u>3,160.15</u> |
| <u>Utilities</u> | <u>1,264.79</u> |
| <u>Total</u> | <u>\$52,015.05</u> |

| | |
|---|--------------------|
| <u>Check Book</u> | <u>\$27,861.30</u> |
| <u>New Bremen Foundation Investment</u> | <u>12,100.43</u> |
| <u>Petty Cash</u> | <u>25.00</u> |
| <u>Total</u> | <u>\$39,986.73</u> |

Reporting Period 12-16-2011 thru 12-31-2012

Dennis Wm. Dicke - Treasurer

**NBHA WAYS & MEANS
2012 ANNUAL REPORT**

The NBHA Ways and Means Committee had a busy year.

The Annual Dinner Meeting was held on March 19, 2012. It was a huge success with approximately 160 guests in attendance. A delicious German meal was served. Our guest speaker was Edith Wissman who presented "This is My Life", an entertaining story of events in her life as well as specific stories from her teaching career.

With summer came our new venture. On Sunday afternoons, from 2:00 – 4:00, when the museum is open to the public, we interviewed and recorded memories of those who wanted to share with us. In return, we offered them a CD of their interview so they could share this with their families. The interviews proved to be very interesting and we are continuing this project.

On September 28th and 29th, we had our "Pumpkin Waffles on a Stick" booth at the New Bremen Pumpkinfest. We also offered regular waffles and cider. Caramel, nuts, chocolate, sprinkles, whipped cream and other delicious toppings could be added to the waffles making a delicious treat. This, too, proved to be a successful event and the weather was great.

A Christmas Celebration was the theme of our 38th Annual Christmas Tree Festival and second year at the Lockkeeper's House. This year we had nearly forty displays from businesses, organizations and individuals. An Open House was held on Sunday, December 2nd, as well as the evening of the community Christmas tree lighting on December 6th. The display was open for viewing by the public throughout the entire Christmas Season during Chamber of Commerce hours and several Sundays as well.

We want to thank everyone for their continued support of the New Bremen Historic Association and its various projects and activities. Diane Paul

Items Recently Donated to the Museum

2/2/2013- Village logo buttons

By Village of New Bremen

2/2/2013- New Bremen Follies programs

By Don Kuck

MEMBERSHIP REPORT THIS QUARTER

(Dennis Dicke, Recorder)

NEW MEMBERS

Barb & Ben Rhinehart

Beverly & Frederick Gilberg

Bill Meiring

Deloris & Don Nevergall

Judith & Larry Coppess

**ADDITIONS TO LIFE MEMBERSHIP
ROSTER**

Marlene (Knost) Lammers

DONATIONS

Jane Elliot, Joe & Pat Meyer, Bill & Jane Moore, Jim & Carol Opperman, Donald Sink, Daryl & Wanda Dammeyer, Dennis & Jane Gruebmeier, Joyce Ruedebusch, Frederick & Joann Mackenbach, Steve & Joyce Schroer, Jim & Janice Wilson, Elizabeth & Franz Sauerland, Dianne Komminsk, New Bremen Foundation, Crown Equipment Corp., Karl & Ethel Mesloh, Chris Kelser, Gary Hirschfeld, Craig Hirschfeld and Anonymous.

MEMBER DEATHS

12/3/2012 Alexander C. Reed (CM)

12/22/2012 Emma (Wehmeyer) Graber

1/6/2013 Janice (Topp) Schroer (LM)

1/23/2013 Joan H. Sunderman (LM)

1/27/2013 Alma Kuest

2/19/2013 Ellen Schierholt Huckriede

3/17/2013 Dave Arnett

3/18/2013 Stan Schroer

MEMORIAL DONATIONS

In Memory of William H. Kuck

By Sheryl Biederman

Some facts about the *New Bremen Sun* and the *Crimson & Gold*

The *New Bremen Sun* newspaper was first published September 17, 1886. *The Sun*, a weekly newspaper, reported some world news but concentrated on local issues of interest to New Bremen.

In 1931, *The Sun* added a new feature called the *Crimson & Gold*, a newsletter written by the students of New Bremen High School. An editor and reporters for the newsletter were selected from the student body each school year. The *Crimson & Gold* continued for 30 years.

The following persons served as editors for *The Crimson & Gold*:

1931-2 Marie Kuest, 1932-3 Phyllis Nussmeyer, 1933-4 Paul Eschmeyer, 1934-5 Jacob Boesel, 1935-6 Frederick Frey, 1936-7 Georgia Fenneman, 1937-8 John Zahn, Jr., 1938-9 Donald Fledderjohann & Antoinette Purpus, 1939-1940 Paul Stueve & Catherine Schroeder, 1940-1 Marian Hespe & Hazel Heitman, 1941-2 Alice Schmidt & John Heisler, 1942-3 Bernadine Luedeke & Jack Moeller, 1943-4 Jane Dietrich & Anna Heisler, 1944-5 Pauline Moeller & Paul Melchert, 1945-6 Virginia Rinehart & Stanley Kuenning, 1946-7 John Koenig and Erline Kuenning, 1947-8 Susan Schulenberg, 1948-9 Jean Dicke, 1949-1950 Molly Lou Kellermeyer, 1950-1 Carol Dammeyer, 1951-2 June Hirschfeld, 1952-3 Doris Thielker, 1953-4 Delores Schroer, 1954-5 Evelyn Bassler, 1955-6 Judy Dietrich, 1956-7 Roslyn Ahlers, 1957-8 Barbara Luedeke, 1958-9 Pat Gels, 1959-1960 Linda Marshall, 1960-1 Dennis Dicke

The *New Bremen Sun* and the *Crimson & Gold* both ceased in 1961.

All but the first two years of the *New Bremen Sun* are available at the New Bremen Library. Ask the librarian for assistance.

This letter was published as part of the *Crimson & Gold* section of the *New Bremen Sun* in 1959.



'59



'58

1959 Speaks

Dear Crimson and Gold,

Ray and I are living in Dover, Delaware. We're living in a trailer park, which is quite different for a town. Here, you walk seven feet and you're in your neighbor's trailer. But Ray and I like it real well, because we have wonderful neighbors.

You will find that when you leave home to go out on your own, it's much different than the life you were used to. No one knows you, no one greets you on the street the way they do in New Bremen and it's really very hard to adjust to. If you're like me, sometimes you feel like just packing your belongings and heading home to your family and the people you know. But after a while, you get used to it and it turns out to be real nice.

Boys, if you join the Air Force, or girls, if you marry a service man, you will find it is altogether different from being a civilian. Here you meet people from all corners of the world. Some are quite different from you. Some are good and some are bad. You've all got to follow the same orders and you all work in the same place.

There are just a few things I have to say to you kids:

(1) If you are planning to be married, be sure first! Don't jump into marriage with one foot up in the clouds and the other one on a banana peel. Think it over seriously and make sure he or she is the right person. But most important, ask yourself if you are mature and able to take the responsibilities on your shoulders.

(2) Don't get married in high school! I know how it is, you feel as if you just can't live without each other for another minute! But remember, you have a whole lifetime together and those good old high school days only come once in a lifetime.

Girls, if you are taking stenography, try to take as much English as possible, because you'll regret it if you don't.

And as you have heard millions of times, "Study Hard!" Lots of luck to every one of you.

Mrs. Ray Meckstroth (Jo Berning) (Class of '59)

The New Bremen Sun, November 26, 1959

JoAnne had some good advice then and I wondered how she and Ray were faring after so many years. I contacted them via e-mail and they sent the following article and pictures to share with all our Towpath readers.

-Gen Conradi

THE MECKSTROTH'S in 2013
Small Town Living in a Big World
By JoAnne Berning Meckstroth

Tim McGraw, popular country western singer recently said, *"We all take different paths in life, but no matter where we go, we take a little of each other everywhere."*

Growing up in New Bremen gave us great childhood memories. Who could forget the family potlucks with huge selections of homemade cakes, pies and bowls of jello? The neighborhood softball games played in the field by the old Catholic church, with pieces of cardboard for bases, a frayed softball and hand me down baseball gloves. On a hot summer night, the game "Kick the Can" would keep us playing for hours. And during high school years, we'd gather around the juke box to drink our bottle of Coca Cola and listen to Elvis Presley sing "You Ain't Nothing but a Hound Dog." These are a just a few of the many childhood experiences that instilled a rich sense of community in us.

When Ray and I traded our small town experience for a transient military life 55 years ago, we took our hometown culture with us. Everywhere we went, we looked for "community." If it couldn't be found, we created it. Small town living was in our DNA. It was the mortar that held us together.

Consider again Tim McGraw's statement. You may have spent your whole life in New Bremen, yet, a little of each of you has been around the world with us. Even though we may not have known each other, you are part of the small town culture that affected our lives. Will you join me as I share our 55 year journey?

Ray always knew he would make a career of the Air Force, so when he slipped a ring on my finger at the age of seventeen, it was not just a love covenant, but a commitment to leave family, friends and familiarity. Still in our teens, we entered this new phase of life with big dreams, big challenges and big adventures.

The Air Force kept us mobilized. During our 23 years of active duty, we raised three children and moved 12 times. Ray traveled the world, while I watched over the home and children, facing "head on" the many challenges of military living. As a young mom, I would sometimes organize an overnight slumber party with a few moms and their children. We played games until the kids were worn out, tucked them into sleeping bags lined up on the floor and spent the rest of the night talking about life. It helped us cope with the stress of single parenting, while our husbands were away on assignment. My daughters still call me the slumber party queen!

Ray's Air Force career was spent in aircraft maintenance and as a flight engineer. Two years of his career were spent in Viet Nam. In 1965, he was sent to Beinh Hoa to work on O1-E & F Forward Air Control aircraft. This was the *smallest* aircraft in the Air Force. It was quite a contrast from his previous assignment in California as a crew chief on the *largest* reciprocating aircraft, the C124. That aircraft now rests in the Wright Patterson Air Force Museum.

In 1968, Ray returned to Viet Nam with the AC-119, which was a second-generation fixed wing gunship. They called it "The Shadow." It not only gave fire support, it was also equipped with an illuminator that provided infrared or white

light that could light up the jungle floor the size of a football field. One particular night, "The Shadow" circled a small Special Forces camp, providing white light for an Army doctor performing a delicate, lifesaving operation on a young soldier. Their missions were always at night, giving fire support and light for Special Forces camps under attack, as well as any other ground unit needing close fire support. The most gratifying missions were when they helped six-man recon teams, found and surrounded by the enemy, survive the night. Over the years, Ray has had several Viet Nam veterans tell him they would not be alive today, if not for "The Shadow." When asked, he will always say his two years in Viet Nam were the most rewarding part of his 23 years in the Air Force.



Ray refueling his Citiabria Aircraft

Living in Alaska was one of Ray's big dreams. God was listening. His last military assignment was to Elmendorf AFB in Anchorage. There is a saying in Alaska, "You either love it or hate it ... there is no in between!" Of course, Ray loved Alaska immediately. However, I was still holding out my judgment when I had a God moment. It happened on a clear, crisp fall morning while watching the sun rise above the snowcapped mountains. A still, small voice inside of me said, "JoAnne, you're home!" I listened. It has been "home" to us for 35 years.

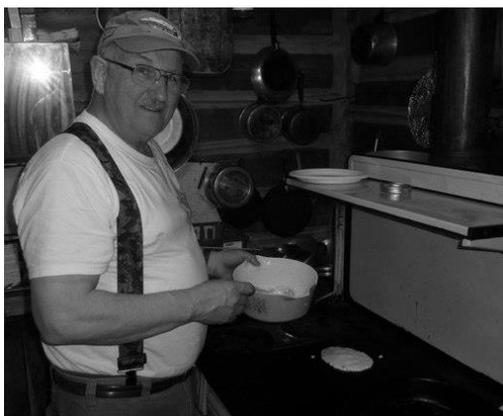
Alaska is full of adventure. Surrounded by the splendor of rugged mountains and glaciers, the pristine beauty of the ocean and the allure of wildlife, it is like no other place in the world. Alaskans work hard and play even harder. We are known for our independent, pioneering spirit; yet, recognize the strength of community life. It is a place where you can still connect with your state politicians, whether it is while shopping at the local store, launching your boat at a favorite fishing hole or simply calling their office. Float planes are a normal mode of transportation in the summer months, and fly in fishing trips are commonly used terms. Alaska, like New Bremen, is deeply embedded in our roots.



Jo with her King Salmon catch

Alaska is also known for its bigness! Big fish, big mountains, big game. Our largest catch was a 130 pound halibut and a King salmon weighing in at 70 pounds, and of course the moose hunts and other large critters. Early in our Alaskan experience, I had to decide if I wanted to be a fisher's widow every summer weekend or be a fisher woman. I chose the latter and can bait a hook and reel in the big ones almost as good as Ray! A nice morning walk outside our log home in Soldotna can quickly shift into a big adventure, when a 1700 pound moose is contending for the same piece of roadway. Guess who wins!

Alaska is full of unique experiences. For the past ten years, Ray has spent ten days in March volunteering on the Iditarod Trail, the longest and biggest dog sled race in the world. Working at the Ophir checkpoint, Ray has met most of the mushers, and works with volunteers from different parts of the world. The last two years, a veterinarian from Bremen, Germany was stationed at his checkpoint. Ray's main job is to provide daily meals for 20 volunteers. All of his cooking is done on an old wood burning, cast iron stove. He is well known for his breakfast menu of sour dough pancakes heaped high on a platter with bacon and sausage.



Ray flipping pancakes at the Iditarod

After Ray retired from the Air Force, he flew for an Alaskan air cargo company, airlifting supplies into remote villages with only a gravel runway for landing. He flew into places most people, even Alaskans, never get to see. After two years, he went back to school for jet certification and was one of the first flight crews for United Parcel Service. Ray, once again, traveled the world as a crew member on a B747 aircraft, until he retired five years ago.



Ray & Grandson at a B747 PFE Control Panel

I, JoAnne, not only watched over the home, I worked in the administrative and ministry field for over thirty years. As the executive director of a national organization called Care Net, I was able to help hundreds of women in crisis in the state of Alaska. After nine years in that position, I became a National Director for an international Christian women's organization. In this position, I traveled throughout the Northwest region of the United States, giving oversight, leadership training and inspiration to many. Over the years, I have traveled to 13 countries and ministered extensively in the U. S. as an inspirational speaker in churches, schools, women's conferences and leadership gatherings. The rewards have been great.

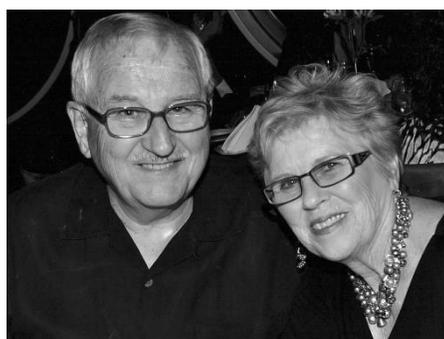


JoAnne visiting with children in the Philippines

Ray and I have come full circle. When the snow falls in Alaska, we say goodbye to our daughter and her family in Anchorage, visit our other two children in Seattle and Roanoke, Texas and then head to New Bremen. We spend several months in the area enjoying hometown living, our family and friends. Alaska is still our home base, but renewing our friendships in New Bremen has been a gift...a connection that greatly enriches our lives.

I hope you have enjoyed my brief summary of the past 55 years. There are far too many experiences to tell the whole story. However, whether vacationing on the Rhine River, on a mission trip in Africa, or deep-sea fishing in Alaska, we still look for community and filter many of our experiences through growing up in a small town in Ohio. Thank you New Bremen, for giving us such a great legacy.

Written by JoAnne Berning Meckstroth



Ray is the son of Earl Meckstroth and Ruth Mesenbrink Meckstroth. JoAnne is the daughter of Herbert Berning and Dorothy Howe Berning Ingram.

In this article we hear from another NBHS Graduate - Bob Gilberg. He has written short stories about growing up in New Bremen and would like to share this one with you.

The Carbide Cannon Incident

By Bob Gilberg, NBHS Class of '58

We were four restless and bored 15 year old boys who were too young to drive and had no older friends with wheels. Everyone who was anyone had a summer job and was working for summer spending money. The 4th of July had come and gone and all allowance and paper route money was spent on firecrackers, rockets and torpedoes the previous week. Our attention turned to going to the municipal swimming pool and checking out the girls. For the most part, that was a futile exercise; we were too skinny, too gawky, car-less, penny-less and clueless – except for Ray. Ray was the man. He had a ducktail haircut! That was radical because the only ducktail cut we had ever seen was on James Dean in “Rebel without a Cause.” But that was Ray; he always pushed the envelope a little more than the rest of our class.



Jr. Varsity Standing: Bill Pence, Ray Meckstroth, Ted Wagner, Ron Baur, Herb Topp, Larry Landwehr, Jim Kettler, Roger Luedeke, Lloyd Blanke **Seated:** Paul Ritter, Bob Wilson, Bob Gilberg, Jerry Shroyer, Ron Gilberg, Unknown, Dave Schaefer

The four of us bonded together that summer as much by boredom as common personalities and interests. Ted and I shared a passion for building balsa wood and paper model airplanes. At Ray's home, there was a barn that included a little workshop on the north side, separate from the bigger open area that was a perfect hideaway for building model airplanes and hanging out...maybe even to sneak a smoke now and then. It was the meeting place for our airplane cult! Charlie did not share those particular interests but was a fun guy who was willing to go along with everything the guys wanted to do.

Barns were also the place where great plots and adventures were hatched. We would plan hikes, bike rides, watermelon heists and all kinds of summer events in the wonderful secrecy of the barn.

Not surprisingly, it was in Ted's barn where the great

Carbide Cannon incident came to life. And it was there, just by the cherry tree, midway between Ted's barn and home where it ended with a bang and crash the like of which legends are born.

A Carbide What?



A Carbide Cannon made by the Big Bang Manufacturing Co., Bethlehem, PA (from the Paul Lietz Collection)

All the older generation seemed to know about Carbide Cannons, but no one had one anymore. They seemed to be like all those other things your parents talked about in the evenings when they reminisced with friends. Something a 15 year old kid could probably have a lot of fun with, but no one bothered to keep. So, we kids didn't know a thing about Carbide Cannons other than what we heard from the older generation.

But they sounded really neat! Little shiny brass miniature cannons that actually shot things.....like marbles! Apparently they were used at sporting events as starting guns---- without projectiles----because they made such a loud bang. They were very popular toys at 4th of July time just after the turn of the 20th century, and on into the 'teens and 'twenties.

If only we could get our hands on a Carbide Cannon, our summer would be complete. But we had no idea of how to find one. In those days, if they didn't carry it at Abbott's hobby shop or the 5 & 10 cents store, our best shot at finding stuff was in Popular Mechanics or Popular Science; back there in the pages with the little ads for radio control airplanes, the Rosicrucian, rare postage stamps, acne creams, Charles Atlas ads, and other neat stuff.

But, the problem was, if you found something you wanted, you had to order it by mail. Back then, something you found and ordered in May was lucky to be delivered that same summer! Even worse, it was likely your Mom would find it in the mail before you did! The odds were pretty high it would be confiscated before you ever even knew it had arrived. And, of course you might find yourself standing there explaining why you needed a such and such, or so and so.... No, ordering a Carbide Cannon wasn't an option. We were going to have to make our own.

The Plan

It did seem like some water pipe and fittings would be all that was going to be needed. We could start simple, with no wheels or polished brass in the beginning; perfect the design and maybe then get fancier as we became better cannoners. With the design mastered (a 12" piece of 3/4" threaded water pipe with a tiny hole for lighting the charge drilled near one end, and a pipe cap), the key thing was to get the project going. The next fundamental question was where to get the carbide.

All it took was a little asking around and we found we might be able to get the carbide at Norb Roettger's New Bremen Machine and Tool shop.

We were there the next day. Four kids and their bicycles, meekly walking into a machine shop where grown men were working lathes and mills, asking if we could please buy some carbide. Norb was a little curious about what we might want carbide for. We didn't know it, but carbide when mixed with water becomes acetylene gas; the stuff that machine shops use for cutting and welding torches. All we knew was that it was needed for Carbide Cannons. When we explained that we were going to use it for a Carbide Cannon, Norb seemed satisfied and fully understood it was for innocent purposes. "How much do you want?" he asked. "How much can we get for \$2?" we asked. He said, "5 pounds." We said, "Sounds OK to us."

Now we had no idea how much carbide a Carbide Cannon used per charge, but 5 pounds sounded like enough to do whatever we needed. In my later life, I have done a little reading on the matter and now know that a typical charge of carbide per shot in the smaller cannons amounts to about 0.0025 oz. per shot. We had just bought enough carbide to fire our yet to be built cannon ten thousand times or more. In other words, we probably had enough to level the town. Or at least enough to drive all the bird life over to Kettlersville for the rest of the summer.

Norb packed up our 5 pounds of carbide in a plastic bag which was then placed in a cardboard box with the ominous warning to not let it get wet, and to not get caught out in the rain while we were carrying the box around on our bicycles. We scooted out of there like a pack of thieves! We had our carbide! We had a design for the cannon! We had the rest of the summer! We had excitement! And it was going to be a very successful summer after all!

The Cannon

The cannon was a flop. We couldn't get it to fire. It just fizzled and fizzled. No bang! No marble projectiles rocketing across the barn and disintegrating into shrapnel against the walls! Nothing! And worse, we couldn't figure out what was going wrong. We just had no clue about how real Carbide Cannons worked.

Since I have now studied up on the matter, I have found that inside these simple looking toys there was some pretty serious engineering at work. It turns out that we used way too much of both carbide and water. I mentioned before the typical charge was 0.0025 oz. of carbide. That is about as much as you can put on the end of your little fingernail. We were using gobs of the stuff! As best I can remember, we were shoveling it in there by the tablespoonful. Hey, we wanted a big bang. And, we had 5 pounds of the stuff to light off. We were trying to go big time, fast!

Real Carbide Cannons have a mechanism that spoons just the right amount of carbide powder into a sealed chamber that allows the acetylene gas to build up a little while before you light it off. We didn't have any such chamber. We just put all the stuff in the mouth of the barrel and tried to light it before it all gassed out of there. Well, we didn't know what we were up against. Our model for how this thing would work was like gun powder cannons. You just loaded everything in from the front and lit it at the touch hole. Ha, in our dreams!

What else can you do with 5 Pounds of Carbide?

After spending too many frustrating hours getting continually defeated by this thing, we were ready for something else. The something else was another fascinating sounding thing: blowing up trash cans as told to us by our Dads and Uncles. Now this didn't sound quite as neat as a cannon, but it did have some appeal. Allegedly, the thing you were really doing was blowing the lid off the trash can to unimaginable heights by placing an "amount" (funny how no one ever knew exact measurements) of carbide in the bottom of an empty trash can, add "an amount" of water, slam the lid on and just stand back.

In those days, all garbage cans were galvanized metal, 35 gallon cans. They were indestructible and lasted for ever. But they did get bent up being bounced in and out of Harold Ahlers' garbage truck. None of them were round any more. They were all either sort of elliptical or square, and none had matching lids. What that meant to us cannoneers was that the things didn't seal! We put the carbide in, we put some water in, and the thing would just sit there and fizzle. Just like the water pipe cannon did!

We began to understand that there was a level of precision needed in this armament manufacturing business that might just be beyond our capabilities. After trying the trash can rocketry thing a few more times, we could see that this wasn't going to take us into the world of excitement we had been visualizing. I mean we were never going to impress any of the other guys (or girls) with fizzing trash cans! Something had to be done and done fast to salvage this dream.

The Depth Charge Experiment

I don't remember anymore who in the group came up with this one. We had all experimented with tossing firecrackers into the canal that runs through downtown New Bremen. It was a perfectly normal way to play with fireworks. We had all been to some WWII movies showing destroyers depth charging the German submarines in those days shortly after the war had ended. We would play that we were American sailors blowing up German subs by tossing fire crackers into the canal.

A little carbide and water placed in a Mason jar was a thing of beauty. And, we had finally got the "amount" thing right! We finally realized that using just the smallest amount needed gave us the best results. It allowed us time to get that Mason jar lid screwed on tight before the thing blew up in our hands. We learned quickly that we needed to put a few rocks in the jar first so it would sink and not just float on top of the water until it blew up. So we depth charged the canal from the top of the locks until we ran out of Mason jars. And having mastered the art of depth charges we left the canal pretty much the worse for wear what with all the groggy fish and broken glass around. And, since Ted's Mom was now out of Mason jars, and we were out of cash, we had pretty much ended our run; but felt we had at last gotten good value out of our carbide investment. Except for: The Ultimate Weapon

The final phase of the Carbide Cannon Incident happened because we had now been at this thing all day and were beginning to tire of too much science with meager results. We had finally begun to understand the complexity of working with volatile gases and to have some limited success, even

though we didn't have a spiffy cannon we could haul around and fire for people. It was now getting to be midafternoon and we still had most of that big box of carbide left. We were sitting outside the barn looking toward Ted's house when, seemingly we all noticed the lid over the cistern at the same time. Aha-a-a, the cistern!

For those who might not know what cisterns were; a cistern was a cement chamber in the ground that was fed roof run-off water by the house's rain gutters. By the 1950's with city water available nearly everywhere in New Bremen, most cisterns had fallen into disuse. But in many cases, the cisterns were still in place, covered by those giant cement lids.. The lid usually had a small hole in the center that had allowed the placement of a cast iron hand pump. However, in those days, most cisterns no longer had hand pumps installed.

What hit us all at the same time was that here was an opportunity to use the remaining carbide in one last big gusher. All we had to do was pour all the carbide powder down the center hole in the cistern lid and see what happened. We would probably get a great gush of gas that would then fizzle out after a short while but we would have safely dispensed with the rest of the carbide.

Charlie's Moment of Immortality

Without thinking about it we dumped the entire remaining box of carbide down that hole! There was no discussion of potential upsides and downsides, what-ifs, or possible environmental effects. Just, splash, down it went! We were creatures of instinct; and our instincts were telling us something awesome could happen and we just had to see what it would be.

It took a few minutes for the pressure to build up. It was sort of quiet at first with just a gentle, but then growing hissing sound that built and built until it began to make the transition to more of a roaring sound. There was a visible gas jet emanating from the center hole of the cistern cover that made everything look all wavy. But it wasn't all that exciting after the first minute or two. So, Charlie said, "I'll light it with a match."

The first match went out, blown out by the force of the jet. So Charlie struck another match and held it in the classic Bogart fashion; all cupped in his hands, close up to his chest. Then he crawled out onto the lid and, with his face nearly over the hole but just back from the stream of the jet, pushed the lit match out there into the unknown with both hands, still protecting the match.

The force of the explosion lifted the heavy concrete cover into the air to a height of several feet; Charlie at first still sprawled across it. But then he flew off, sort of flying on his back. Sailing backward, away from the growing disaster in the cistern, and over toward the cherry tree, Charlie landed about the same time that the cistern lid came back down to earth. There had been a red flame coming out of the center hole of the cistern cover that rose to a height of the 2nd story of the house. It had spread into a large ball of smoke and flames with sparks emitting from the dark, roiling thing. But just like that, it was over. Charlie was lying at the foot of the cherry tree, dazed but conscious. The lid had been fractured into six or eight large pie shaped wedges of 8 inch thick concrete that were now lying more or less back in place over the cistern. Charlie was moaning and in need of medical attention. We were all

dumbstruck. We couldn't imagine the destructive power that we had been playing with all day.

Ted's dad, who worked 2nd shift somewhere and had been sleeping, came stumbling groggily out of the back porch door, "What are you kids doing?" "Nothing," we said, "Just playing with some firecrackers. We threw 'em down the cistern." He didn't notice the fractured cistern lid in his sleepiness. And, thankfully, he didn't notice that Charlie, lying over under the cherry tree didn't have any eyebrows and eyelashes, or for that matter, hair on top of his forehead.

The important thing now, other than avoiding explaining any of this to any adults, was to get Charlie to Doc Fledderjohann's office as fast as possible. Charlie was conscious now and beginning to feel a little singed. He didn't remember much and seemed quite calm over the whole thing. We loaded him on the back of Ted's Schwinn bicycle. As luck would have it, when we got to the Doc's office, there were no other patients. We had to take the Doc into our confidence that day so Charlie could get proper treatment. Doc Fledderjohann was every kid's best friend. So we told the Doc what he needed to know and he took care of the rest. He had one of those old country doctor offices with shelves and cabinets full of dark brown bottles with all sorts of elixirs and medicines that nearly always could cure whatever was needing curing.

The Doc put some salve on Charlie's face, told us he had 1st degree burns over much of his face and some 2nd degree burns on his forehead and hands, but that there was no serious injury. He mixed some ointments in a small brown bottle for Charlie and sent us on our way with that look...kids will be kids...wonder if they will survive it? No questions and no charges, either. Truly a wonderful man and doctor.

Do you know where, and when, there was a better place and time to grow up? None better than New Bremen.

After graduation I moved to the other end of the country. But I still always remember this tale whenever we get to reminiscing about "days of our youth" stories with friends. Long ago I made a commitment to myself that someday I would take the time to write it down as a short story that hopefully we could all enjoy. (Copyright 2003 Robert Gilberg)



Bob Gilberg

100 Years ago in New Bremen

1913

- Auglaize Motor Car Co. is successfully making the **Auglaize Truck**. (See *The Towpath*, January 1989 for more information.)



An Auglaize Truck

- **Huenke barn at White Mountain Creamery burned.** It was one of the largest barns in this part of Ohio.
- **Free mail delivery** may be tried out in New Bremen. (*New Bremen Sun* February 7, 1913)
- **Horses and walking** are the primary ways to get places in **1913**.



Dr. M. S. Eker Meyer making rounds in the early 1900s.

*A near-runaway occurred on Monroe Street, Wednesday afternoon about three thirty. August Kuest was driving along from the west, when between Franklin and Main Streets his horses were frightened and in some way became unmanageable. At the post office Herbert Schulenberg made an attempt to grab the reins of the far horse, but missed his hold, when he started on a sprint alongside for another attempt; however, Gus Kunning, rushing out of the First City Bank, got ahead of him and brought the team to a standstill on short notice. No breakages nor injuries of any kind. *New Bremen Sun*, April 25, 1913*

- **The Crown Auditorium and Theater opened.** *New Bremen Sun* January 10, 1913 (Note: Current Lock One Theater was restored in 2002 to be a facsimile of the 1913 Crown Theater.)
- New Bremen citizens quickly responded to call for help in **Dayton flood of 1913**.

REAL SYMPATHY

WAS EXHIBITED BY NEW BREMEN CITIZENS FOR DAYTON FLOOD SUFFERERS

Car Load Provisions Contributed in Less Than Half A Day
The call for assistance from the flood suffering city of Dayton, last week Saturday was responded to in quicker order and more practical manner by residents of New Bremen and vicinity than perhaps any other town and community of the state. In less than half a day there were

donated over 350 bushels of potatoes, ten barrels of ham, over 600 loaves of bread, hundreds of dozens of fresh and boiled eggs, boxes and boxes of crackers, cookies, canned goods, etc., and at about 1:45 Sunday afternoon the special electric freight car on the Western Ohio was taken in charge of a committee of local men and accompanied to its destination...

*The committees in charge of the car were Otto Boesel, Mayor of New Bremen, Lafe Kuenning, Emil Laut, Herbert Schulenberg and Raymond Sullivan, and all five of them accompanied the same as far as Troy, where it was transferred by wagons to a D. and T. traction car during the night and the provisions and committee reached Dayton Monday morning. *New Bremen Sun*, April 13, 1913*



- New Bremen citizens experienced **flooding of canal**.

- **Fourth of July Parade, July 4, 1913**

Mayor Boesel has given out Instructions as to the Line of March...

Assemble on Walnut Street, north of Monroe at 9 AM and form line of March. Start promptly at 9:30 AM on following route: south on Walnut to South Street, thence west to Washington, thence north to Monroe, west to Main, north to Pearl, west to Herman, south to Vogelsang, east to Main, north to Monroe, east to Washington, south to Cherry, east to Walnut, then disband.

- **Cement & sandstone sidewalks** will replace brick and gravel walkways in New Bremen.
- **Cement sidewalk built to Cemetery** (about 1 and one half miles of cement) at a cost \$2,650.00.

*... Ofttimes a stroll to the cemetery proves a source of great pleasure for pedestrians on a Sunday afternoon, and although the road is in as good a condition as any that may be found near here, the proposed sidewalk will nevertheless prove to be much more comfortable and convenient for pedestrians after a long absence of rain or during wet and muddy weather periods; especially is the latter true in the stretch from the Lock Two school house to the cemetery. It is hoped that everything will be in readiness by the approach of fall. *New Bremen Sun*, June 27, 1913*

- Lock Two residents demonstrated their belief in modern improvements and contributed money to build a sidewalk from Lock Two to the cemetery. **(Editor's Note: Portions of that sidewalk still remain along the New Bremen-New Knoxville Road and the Lock Two Road.)**

- **Klanke Furniture Factory fire** in September 1913. The factory was a total loss and threw over 70 men out of employment. Plans were put in place to build Auglaize Furniture Factory by end of year.

EARLY NEW BREMEN BANDS

The golden age of community bands was from 1860 to 1910. Bands were an integral part of most towns and New Bremen was no exception.

During these years New Bremen had several bands in which the members pursued other professions and played music as a hobby. One of the earliest bands to organize was the New Bremen Citizens Band led by Cornelius Hengen. This band was also known as the City Band.

Several organizations had their own bands such as St. Peter's Church, The Knights of Pythias and The Sons of Rest.



St. Peter's Church Community Orchestra from Left: Herbert Garmhausen, Henry Mueller, Edward Conradi, John Mueller, Charles Garmhausen, August Mueller circa 1890.

The Little Six Band and the Gilmore Band were the subject of this Sun article:

Looking Backward to 1888 – 50 Years Ago

By Snurb (F. W.Bruns) in the New Bremen Sun,

August 5, 1938

Fifty years ago New Bremen had two musical organizations, namely the Little Six Band and the Gilmore Band.

The ranks of the Little Six Band, then composed of eight members, now has been reduced to two, namely John Laut and August Mueller.

For a number of years the band played concerts every Saturday afternoon and evening at Kies and Miller's Beer Garden in Piqua during the summer season. Only recently the writer met an "old timer" from Piqua, who recalled the first concert played by the band. In those days the trip to Piqua was made by hack and one can imagine that, owing to the route from New Bremen to Piqua having been mostly unimproved or mud roads, the members according to the "Old- Time" Piquad, did not make a natty appearance upon their arrival. Their

uniforms were dust covered and when John Laut, leader of the band, and his fellow musicians stepped down from the hack some person present in the crowd in front of the Garden remarked, "Little Six Band of New Bremen, they sure are a seedy looking bunch."

However, it did not take long to convince the spectator that he was laboring under a wrong impression, as after the band played a march at the entrance to the Garden, he changed his mind and followed the others inside where with friends they made their way to a table and chairs and where they remained until late in the evening, listening to the initial concert. The concert went over so well that the owners of the Garden continued to hire the band for several years.

Now for the Gilmore Band. The members of this organization were Adolph Boesel, cornetist and leader, G. A. Kunning, alto, Martin Buerkle, baritone, Julius Schwaberow, snare drum, and Paul Buerkle, bass drum. The band's headquarters and rehearsal room was in the rear second story of the Boesel & Kunning business block at Main and Monroe Streets. They held weekly practice meetings and the entire contingent, with the exception of Mr. Boesel, were beer drinkers. Before the practice period was started the growler was brought into play and rushed to Adolph Steinberg's saloon across the street.

The growler equipment was a gallon sprinkling can, with the sprinkling equipment removed. The spout of the can served in place of beer glasses, and the first round, which was termed a "Kuck-Schluck" usually started the boys out in a happy mood. The band featured playing for wedding and birthday parties and also went on parade before and after elections. All the members of this organization are deceased, with the exception of Paul Buerkle, who I am informed, is still hale and hearty at three score and ten years and lives a retired life at Pine Bluff, Ark.

During the year 1898 The Little Six Band played for the Civil War veterans' GAR- 37th OVI reunion and also played and marched the New Bremen boys off to the Spanish-American War.



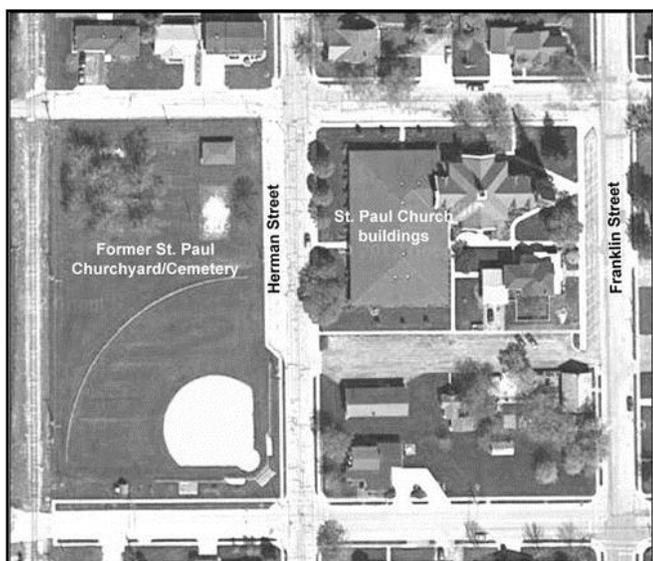
**LITTLE GERMAN BAND (also known as the Little Six Band)
l-r: August Wehrman, Henry Weinberg, Christ Laut, Ferd Laut,
Theobald Steinebrey (leader), Herman Mohrman, John Laut, Fred Pape
[Taken at the first Tri-County Fair held in 1887]**

*The Little Six Band played for my Mom and Dad's wedding and they led the wedding party from the house to the dance hall in a hard snowstorm! The wedding couple was Theodore Doenges and Emmeline Schwetter and the wedding was October 13, 1898. At that time my Dad, Theodore Doenges, had the dance hall in Lock Two. –
Bernice Dilger, The Towpath, October, 1989*

Lucille Francis Works on Cemetery Records

Our readers mentioned the fine job that Lucille Francis, the former editor of “The Towpath”, had done and wondered if she was enjoying her retirement. We are happy to report that she is still busy but is now devoting her time to other history-related projects. She is continuing to work on local cemetery records, including the first town cemetery at the St. Paul Churchyard. She has recently completed posting the St. Paul Church burials from the time of the town’s founding (1833) through December 1865 when the church cemetery was closed to future use. There are at present 1422 names posted to the website: <http://www.findagrave.com>. (Click on search for a cemetery. Type in St. Paul Churchyard. Click on U.S. & Ohio.)

The map below should answer those questions about “Where was the St. Paul Churchyard?”



Lucille is also in the process of photographing all existing tombstones in the local cemeteries, especially German Protestant Cemetery, and adding them to the FindAGrave website.

Another project is adding obituaries from “The New Bremen Sun” and “The Minster Post” to FindAGrave.

All of these projects make finding your New Bremen roots much easier and she is one of our best local genealogy references. Lucky for us, Lucille is also still willing to be our mentor on “Towpath” questions and for that we are thankful.

[This message was approved by Lucille.]

Local Man Made Donation To Cincinnati Zoo in 1903



(Great Horned Owl Photo by Microsoft)

Founded in 1875, The Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Gardens is the second oldest zoo in the United States. The Zoo was designated as a National Historic Landmark in 1987 due to the significant architecture in the Elephant House, Reptile House and Passenger Pigeon Memorial. The following excerpt from the *New Bremen Sun* tells about a New Bremen horned owl that went to live at the Zoo.

G. A. Kunning shipped a fine specimen of horned owl to the Cincinnati Zoo the fore part of this week. The animal had been caught in a steel trap by the Huckriede boys north of town. They had set the trap for chicken hawks and were very much amazed to get the owl as prey. Luckily the bird had been caught by only one claw and was therefore in good condition for the Zoo. (*New Bremen Sun*, August 21, 1903)

G.A. Kunning received a letter from the management of the Cincinnati Zoological Garden this week thanking him for the shipment and advising him of the safe arrival of the horned owl sent them last week. Gust’s name will now be found as one of the donors of that famous institution. (*New Bremen Sun*, August 28, 1903)

(Editor’s note: According to the ODNR website the Great Horned Owl is the largest of Ohio’s resident owls. It is considered the top bird of prey, fearing no creature but man.)

Our Miss Burk



Alvina S. Burk in 1930

The picture of Alvina Burk and Frieda Dierker in the last issue raised the question of how long Miss Burk taught in New Bremen. Tom Fricke suggested we write an article about her and this is the information we found.

Alvina S. Burk was born in 1894 the youngest of five children of J. H. and Anna (Frische) Burk. The family lived on a farm southwest of Wapakoneta. Her brother Dr. William Burk was a dentist with a practice in New Bremen from 1912 until his death of the Spanish flu in 1918. According to Zion's Church records, Dr. Burk married Hilda Komminsk in 1914. They had a daughter Mary Elizabeth (Betty).

In 1920 Alvina Burk, a graduate of Heidelberg University in Tiffin, was hired to teach math in New Bremen High School. She made her home with her sister-in-law Hilda (Komminsk) Burk and niece Betty on South Washington Street.

When she began her teaching career in New Bremen, the high school was located in a building that was located near the elementary building on South Franklin Street. In 1920 there were 256 students in grades 1 through 8 and 111 in the high school. In addition to teaching math, Miss Burk was appointed High School principal in 1923 and continued in that position until her retirement in 1965. The local chapter of the National Honor Society is named in her honor.



The Class of 1930 was the first class to graduate from the high school built on Walnut Street in 1929. Miss Burk is in the middle of the back row.

Miss Burk was the President of the New Bremen Women's Club from 1940-1942. She kept in touch with many of her former students. Just as she remembered her students, they remembered her and often invited her to class reunions. She spoke of her 45 years of teaching two generations of students at a program in 1979. Our Miss Burk died in 1981.



Alvina Burk in 1979.

(If you have memories of Miss Burk we would be happy to include them in the next issue.)

History Mystery Page

Thank you, everyone, for your phone calls, e-mails and letters! Are you ready for the new challenge? Remember to write, call or e-mail your answers...



Who is this brave boy sitting on the cannon in City Park (east of St. Paul Church behind the post office) in 1933?



Who are these individuals circa 1965?



What was the name of the New Bremen organization active in the 1890s whose members wore this hat?



What two businesses are represented in this 1948 photo? Can you name the men?

Please send your answers for the History Mystery Page to
NBHA, P.O. Box 73, New Bremen, Ohio 45869
Or call or e-mail your answer to
Gen at gen@nktelco.net
Joyce at jdr@nktelco.net
Your answers will appear in the next issue of
The Towpath.

History Mystery Answers for the January 2013 Issue



Alvina Burk & Frieda Dierker



Bill Moore & Brad Klose



**Harold "Specky" Speckman
in the Equity Store**



**Seated: Jim Purdy, Cliff Gray
Standing: Bill Gels, Everett Schmidt, Ron
Hittepole, Carl Roediger, Ed Martin**



A Butter Churn

From Our Readers:

Stan & Dona Mae (Speckman) Kuenning recognized The Equity Store and Harold Speckman. They also identified Miss Alvina Burk and Frieda Dierker as the New Bremen school employees, the butter churn and most of the golfers.

Jim Rempe identified Alvina Burk, the butter churn and the buildings behind the "Cowboys." He also recognized two of the golfers- Ron Hittepole and Carl Roediger.

Don Luedeke identified Alvina Burk and Frieda Dierker, The Equity and Harold Speckman and the butter churn.

Linda (Coble) Jones recognized her uncle Specky and the Equity and remembers going there with her dad and getting a marshmallow sundae with chocolate ice cream and peanuts. Yum-m-m.

Jane Moore identified the "cowboys" as Bill Moore and Brad Klose. She also recognized the butter churn.

Mark Schmidt recognized all but one of the golfers. His dad Everett Schmidt golfed in the STAMCO golf league and Bill Gels was his partner. His sister **Sue (Schmidt) Schmackers** identified all of the men.

Dru (Luedeke) Meyer was able to identify Alvina Burk and the butter churn.

Oatie and Roger Busse identified Alvina Burk and Nurse Frieda Dierker.

Kohneita Lear identified the butter churn and says she has one just like it.

Sandra Conradi identified the butter churn.

Lois (Westerbeck) Stammen identified the butter churn. She said that the type pictured became popular after the old wooden ones. Lois says she has one of each. She also said that she "Loves the Towpath!"

Sue (Schulenberg) Rabe identified Alvina Burk and Frieda Dierker correctly and said..."I certainly enjoy *The Towpath*, as do so many. Thanks for your and Joyce's good and hard work in making it serve us all so well."

Tom Fricke identified Alvina Burk. He also recognized the buildings in the background of the "cowboys" picture. He recognized "Specky" and the Equity and said that Specky was his dad's cousin. He also recognized Ron Hittepole and Carl Roediger as members of the STAMCO golf team. And he identified the object as a butter churn.

*Great job, Readers. Keep those cards,
letters, calls and e-mails coming. We love to
hear from you!*

--Gen & Joyce

[Type text]

**New Bremen Historic Association
P.O. Box 73**

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NBHA Museum – 120 N. Main St.



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If your newsletter is “undeliverable”, it will be returned to us, costing us from **\$2.50-\$3.00** per copy postage!

UPCOMING EVENTS 2013

JUNE, JULY AND AUGUST.... The **Museum** will be open each **Sunday from 2 to 4 PM**. Please plan to visit and bring your family and friends. We have lots of interesting things for you to see.

SEPTEMBER.....Visit our booth at **Pumpkinfest**

DECEMBER.....Christmas Tree Festival and Open House at the Lockkeeper’s House

More Photos from the Annual Meeting



Ed & Sue Heuker

Address Service Requested



Bartt & Michelle Suchland



NBHA President Larry Dicke Speaks to Members at Annual Meeting
(Photos by E. Jane Henry)