

THE TOWPATH

Published Quarterly
January-April-July-October
THE NEW BREMEN HISTORIC ASSOCIATION
APRIL 2020

Coronavirus Pandemic in Ohio

It has been our custom to use the first page of the April *Towpath* for review of the NBHA Annual Dinner Meeting. This year the March meeting has been postponed due to mandates by Ohio's Governor DeWine to combat the coronavirus pandemic.

NBHA President Dave Maurer contacted all board members and the decision was promptly made to postpone the event. All ticket holders were contacted and will be advised when a new date is set.

As we send this to the printer, a National Emergency has been declared to keep our citizens safe. Things are very

unsettled and we are facing troubled times. But this is not the first time New Bremen has faced troubled times like this.

Novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV)

Early in our history the first settlers were affected by the Cholera Pandemic in 1849. At that time it was not known what caused the illness or how to treat it and in just 10 weeks about 20% of the people of New Bremen died. (More information about this event is available in *The Towpath* October 2016 issue.)

Another pandemic occurred during World War I known as the Spanish Influenza. Locally measures were taken to protect our citizens by closing schools and churches and cancelling events. (The *Towpath* October 2018 issue reports on this disease.)

Measures were taken to quarantine citizens during the 1930s Scarlet Fever epidemic. (Read *The Towpath* April 2017 issue for more information.)

Again in the 1940s and 1950s, the rise of polio cases caused much concern. In 1949, six of the 17 cases of polio in Auglaize County were in New Bremen. (Read more info in *The Towpath* July 2012 issue.)

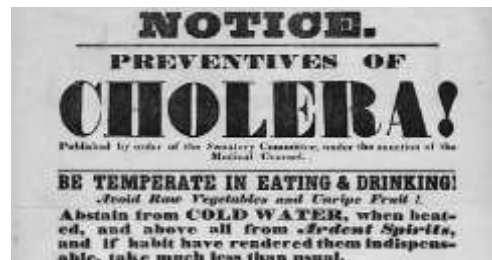


Past issues (1987-2015) of *The Towpath* can now be read online on our website.

www.newbremenhistory.org

These examples from our history show the people of New Bremen, by following precautions, have overcome some trying times.

Now by working together and taking care of each other, we can do it again!



New York City Handbill 1832



The cartoon above was drawn by Howard "Bud" Kettler in November of 1936. Howard was the cartoonist for the *Crimson & Gold* page of the *New Bremen Sun*



Soon it will be possible for you to access the most recent issues of *The Towpath* online. To do this we will need your email address to set up your account for online access. To do this, send an email to info@newbremenhistory.org and request online access. This email goes to Jack Gilberg, our webmaster, and he will set you up with a temporary password in a reply email giving you login information and instructions how to access the *Towpath*.

"THE TOWPATH" is a historical reflection of New Bremen and the surrounding area published quarterly by the New Bremen Historic Association and mailed to all members. 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. at same address)

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

NEW MEMBERS

Isaac Hurley

Rich & Betty Plattner

Jeff Koenig

Neal Hittepole

Dennis Wint

Janet Stienecker

Christine Schott

NEW LIFE MEMBERS

Ron & Jane Phlipot

Jeff Koenig

Janet Stienecker

MEMBER DEATHS

Daniel Johns (LM)

11/9/2019 **James Waesch (LM)**

12/8/2019 **Donald Westerheide (LM)**

12/24/2019 **Barbara Poppe Block (CM)**

3/13/2020 **Douglas F. Harrod**

(Douglas served as NBHA President in 1998.)

(CM=Charter Member LM=Life Member)

DONATIONS

Louise Davis, Robert Braun, John & Eleanor Brucken, Howard & Emily Reisner, William & Cindy Young.

MEMORIAL DONATIONS

In Memory of Barbara Poppe Block by Tom Block Family.

In Memory of Carl Wuebbenhorst by Marilou Wuebbenhorst.

Monthly Raffle Winners

January-\$100-Robert Braun (AZ), \$75-Marilou Wuebbenhorst (OH), \$50-Sharon Leffel (OH)

February-\$100-Judith Jones (FL), \$75-Anne Rabe (NY), \$50-Patricia Broerman (NB)

March winners will be drawn at the April Board Meeting.

NBHA Board Members especially thank those winners who have chosen to increase the profits by returning their winnings.

Items Recently Donated to NBHA

US Army uniform WWII (Werner Henry Prenger) by **Linda Dicke**; St. Paul book (1908), 1933 NB Centennial book, 1983 apron for Sesquicentennial by **Diane Dicke**; Lampert's Livestock jacket by **John Turner**; Binder of NB photos by **Diane Grilliot**; Graduation certificate and term reports (Henry Luedeke), two photos St. Paul Sunday School class by **Minster Historical Assoc.**

Letters

- Love the Towpath...**Randy McCune**
- I really enjoyed reading the last Towpath...**Sandra Conradi**
- Just received my Towpath. Another great issue!...**John T. Dickman**
- I enjoy reading the Towpath. You are doing a great job...**James Scheer**
- Nice job on updating your website. Love it!...**Doris Tangeman**
- Don't want to miss the Towpath. I enjoy each one so much...**Richard Huckriede**



NBHS Class of 1998 Held Reunion

The Class of '98 gathered on February 29th, 2020 to celebrate their 22 Year Class Reunion. Due to many reasons, the Class of '98 held a 6 Year Reunion and an 11 Year Reunion so celebrating on traditional years has gone out the window. The day began with a tour of the old school before it is torn down this summer. The Class of '98 was the 2nd to last class to graduate from the old building. Afterwards, two buses were loaded up and made stops at local microbreweries.



Pictured L to R-Row 1: Kristina (Teague) Morris, Kate (Houseworth) Johnson, Betsy (Kamin) Barhorst, Leah Emmons, Kristen (Wierwille) Nelson, Christa (Bornhorst) Heckman, Jill (Farley) Specia, Susie (Nerderman) Garrison.
Row 2: Jennifer (Feltz) Goings, Jenny (Marshall) Eilerman, Rachel (Fark) Gehrlisch, April Grunden, Jamie (Ritter) Long, Sarah Smith, Cheryl (Vanderhorst) Koester.

Row 3: Renee (Grilliot) Gerling, Christy (Naseman) Eilerman, Rodney Suchland, Casey Woehrmyer, Aaron Schmitmeyer, Scott McDaniel.

Row 4: Ryan Lochtefeld, Randy Heitkamp, Charlie Borchers, Greg Kuenning.

Row 5: Adam Moeller, Mike Platfoot, Luke Scharfenberger, BJ Martin.

Also attending but not in photos were Andy Miller, Scott Nagel, Ben Schmiesing and Rob Bambauer, as well as many spouses, betrothed, friends and a few other classmates via Video Calling. A great time was had by all who attended and we are hoping to not wait another 11 years for the next one! -Rodney Suchland

A Challenge for you from Jim Kettler!

Nicknames from yesterday have come up for discussion every so often. Here is a smattering:

Bud, Butch, Curly, Fat, Flip, Freeze, Ham, Irish, Jake, Lefty, Mugsy, Mookie, PP, Peanut, Peewee, Pete, Red, Rollo, Satch, Shorty, Snooky, Sax, Swats, Stubby, Squirrel, Smokey, Tafe, Tiny, Toots, Toodily, Turkey, Whitey, Windy.

These are mostly memories from the 1950s. Can you add the last name? Several, of course, are multiples.

Good Luck, **Jim Kettler (NBHS Class of 1958)**

NBHA Financial Report 2019

Check Book Balance 1-1-2019	\$	43,829.36
INCOME:		
Auglaize County Grant	\$	750.00
Book Sales	\$	70.00
Donations	\$	3,971.50
Historic Association Annual Dinner	\$	1,360.00
Life Members-New	\$	2,000.00
Membership Dues	\$	4,367.88
Memorials	\$	1,645.00
Raffle Income	\$	10,130.00
Total	\$	24,299.38
EXPENSES:		
Bonds	\$	100.00
Contract Services	\$	200.00
Dues	\$	150.00
Web Site	\$	1,269.00
Historic Association Annual Dinner	\$	920.00
Lundeman Museum	\$	1,569.22
Insurance	\$	1,233.00
Lawn Maintenance	\$	1,383.88
Misc. Expenses	\$	527.25
Office Supplies	\$	488.57
Paper Museum	\$	13,418.36
Postage	\$	233.25
Raffle	\$	3,526.41
Real Estate Taxes	\$	40.00
State Taxes	\$	13.43
Towpath Mailing	\$	917.89
Towpath Printing	\$	2,351.56
Utilities	\$	4,244.77
Total	\$	32,564.79
Check Book Balance 12-31-2019	\$	35,559.95
Edward Jones Investments	\$	45,713.13
New Bremen Foundation Investment	\$	17,712.43
Petty Cash	\$	60.00
Total	\$	99,045.51

Reporting Period:
1-1-2019 thru 12-31-2019
This is an unaudited report

Dennis Wm. Dicke - Treasurer

Looking Back **EDITH (BLANKE) WISSMAN**

Speaker

2012 New Bremen Historic Association Annual Dinner Meeting

When I was asked to speak at the historical society dinner, I asked myself "Why Me?" I then thought of the definition of history. "The branch of knowledge dealing with past events." OK with that definition, my life as well as yours is a part of history.

My 83 years have been part of our great heritage in New Bremen. The only time away was my college years. I have decided to entitle this talk "This is My Life" in hope it will evoke memories in your life.

I didn't know where to start but decided on music. My interest in music began at a very early age. Grandma Laut played the piano, Grandpa Laut told of his trip to Cincinnati down the canal to play his bass viol, Grandpa Blanke whistling "Turkey in the Straw" and Grandma Blanke cranking the old RCA Victrola to entertain my cousin and me.

I began piano lessons at the age of eight. Being an only child, I was expected to wash the dishes. I must admit I tried to get out of this by telling mother I had to practice my piano lesson. Sometimes it worked.

My first audience was a white Eskimo Spitz named Fluffy. She would sit by the piano when I practiced showing her approval or disapproval by wagging her tail. Since then people listening to me have changed. In high school I accompanied choral groups, in college not only working for my degree but played for Miss Phillips and her modern dance and square dance classes. During John and my married life he often accompanied me to many organizations where I was asked to play. He often said he thought I enjoyed the evening more than the audience. It was true.

If you were to ask our girls, they knew if Mother was at the piano playing loud and forcefully, you might want to steer clear of her for a while. But if she was playing quietly it was OK. This still holds true because playing the piano is a great stress release for me.

Through the years I have tried to share my music with many people and always remember what my Mother and Father taught me. **THE MORE YOU GIVE, THE MORE YOU GET.**

Well, what can I say about 35 years of teaching children to enjoy music? My philosophy was that all the birds in the forest do not sing well, but they all enjoy it. I truly believe I could have written a book about unusual experiences



during these years. Thank you students for making these happy years of my life.

I also want to thank Ethel Mesloh for adding happiness to my life by playing duets with me for many people.

On to education. I was reared in this climate. My dad, three uncles, two aunts, and a cousin were all teachers. My cousin Virgil and I still are trying to decide how our grandparents who owned a 40 acre farm could send four sons to college, three to Ohio Northern and one to Miami. At Blanke get-togethers there were two subjects never discussed - politics and education (better that way).

Yes, I was educated at Central School on South Franklin Street and graduated in 1946 from N.B. High School. Do any of you remember Miss Shaw and her love of birds? (She took us on bird hikes early in the morning.) Miss Streine, our 2nd grade teacher used poetry to guide expression in our reading. Some examples of the poems were: *How do you like to Go Up in a Swing*, *The Gingham Dog and Calico Cat*, and at Halloween- *The Goblins will Get you if you Don't Watch Out*. Then came sixth-grade and this was my hardest year of education. Why? My dad was my teacher.

I began working at the drug store when I was a 7th grader. What does this have to do with education, you say? Well, simply this. I don't know how many of you were blessed to work at the drug store for Urban "Doc" Schwieterman. A large amount of my college education was paid because he was a man who believed in education and wanted to help students achieve their goals. My first pay was 15 cents an hour. I thought I was rich.

On to Miami for four wonderful years and then 35 years of teaching at Waynesfield, Moulton, New Knoxville, and New Bremen.

I gave a talk not too long ago at a Delta Kappa Gamma meeting citing changes in education. I will only mention two examples that shocked most young educators in attendance (except the oldie goldies.) My beginning salary in 1950 at Waynesfield was \$1500 for the year. I taught all music classes (vocal and instrumental) plus high school girls' physical education. The other one was that teachers were not to be married. For several years in my teaching career, you could not teach if you were pregnant.

Again I could go on and on about sports in my life. I was born on May 2, 1928. My first exposure to sports began on May 30, 1928, when I was taken to a Lima Loco Memorial Day Double Header. My Dad was catching and he wanted mother and me to be there. It was when he played for the Lima Locos he was privileged to play on the same team with Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig at an exhibition game in Lima.

As an interesting side note, there were no pads for catcher's mitts in those days when Dad caught and often Mother would put a piece of round steak in his glove for padding. By the time the game was over it was hamburger.

I can't begin to tell you how many ball games I have been to because I continued my love for sports when John and I began dating. I have talked about baseball, but our interests included football, basketball, volleyball, golf, and most any sport you could mention. Many of you do remember the Western Ohio Baseball League and how much it meant to citizens of New Bremen. Our girls knew what they would be doing on Wednesday nights and Sunday afternoons because Dad was playing ball. As all of you know John and I were loyal Miami fans as well as our beloved New Bremen Cards. I continue to be as loyal to our sports program as this 83 year old body will allow.

And now a few words about my family. I was blessed to know four sets of great grandparents which was uncommon in my early life. Maybe I'll just throw out some names of my family members and you will recognize them as part of building our town: Speckman, Laut, Wissman, Schafer, Harjehausen, Neuman, and Blanke.

Just two quick stories: Great Uncle Herman Blanke delivered milk in his wagon drawn by a horse and the horse knew every stop. I spent much time with grandparents on a farm near McCartyville on Blanke Road.

Now an update on my present family: My loving John to whom I was married 57 years passed away 4 years ago. Our two daughters, Chris who is an emergency room nurse at Joint Township District Memorial Hospital and Cindy who is a retired teacher of 35 years. Wonderful sons-in-law, Bill and Jerry. I also have two grandchildren, Jeff and Nikki Poeppelman and Larry and Janele Ballinger. And of course my three great-grandchildren: Alexa, Aaron, and Brady Poeppelman.

This wonderful family, along with friends and other relatives have made my life a very happy one.

As part of my topic how could I not mention a few more memories? Hilda Ludwig and Wilhelmenia Blanke's Beauty Parlor; Plays given by Women's Club, Pythian Sisters and PTA; Wedding Receptions including John and mine; Dancing Lessons with the Tinnermans; Stamcos Christmas Parties served by Legion and Auxiliary members; Teenage Dances; Junior and Senior Proms; New Year's Eve Parties; Meetings and Conventions. How many more can you add?

Before I finish I want to say this. I was truly happy for those many years of teaching but I am also very happy and enjoying retirement. Sitting in my home, I thought about the years completed. What a time building friendships and foundations, trusts, and understanding structures are not easily seen by the passerby. Memories make us happy and I know I owe a thank you to many people. I thank you for the wonderful memories.

What a historic moment to remember all these things. Yes, this is our wonderful life in New Bremen.

Now in 2020, Edith kindly gave us permission to reprint her 2012 speech. She is still enjoying her wonderful life in New Bremen.

Happily her family has grown to add more great grandchildren; Brycen, Crew and Brooklyn Ballinger.

Recently she had the honor of handing out the game ball at a New Bremen Cardinal basketball game. She was escorted to center court by her great grandson, Aaron Poeppelman.

To end her talk in 2012, Edith gave a handout of the poem, *Our Home Town*, written in 1935 by Lina Brucken. Edith says that this poem is still a favorite of hers and she thinks every citizen of New Bremen should have this heritage poem. The poem focuses on the positive aspects of New Bremen, names the businesses at that time and offers suggestions for the future.

At the 2012 Dinner Meeting, Edith read the last three stanzas of the poem to the audience. We are happy to see that our community has addressed the poem's suggestions for change.

The poem *Our Home Town* is available in the *Towpath* October 1992 issue. *The Towpath* is available on line at www.newbremenhistory.org.



The NBHS Class of 1946 celebrated their 70th Anniversary Reunion in 2016. Standing: Robert Donnerberg, Everett Topp, Edith (Blanke) Wissman, Ken Eckhart. Seated: Stan Kuenning, Evelyn (Westerbeck) Kittle.



In 1902, on South Washington Street, four of New Bremen's oldest mercantiles were located side by side. Most had been in business since the days of Ober Bremen. The oldest located on the corner of Washington and Front Streets was Speckman and Nieter's Dry Goods & Grocery. This store dated back to 1852 and was the site of the robbery that led to the Bloody Barn Battle in 1879. (Read more about the robbery in the October, 2000 of the *Towpath* at www.newbremenhistory.org)

By 1923 according to the *History of Auglaize County*, Vol.2, the store had a frontage of 115 feet and a floor space of 17,550 sq. feet. The store had 8 departments and the book states it was a “well equipped and outfitted store”. Local historian Ralph May was 10 years old when the Arcade opened. In his book, *Ralph May Remembers*, he shared these memories.

... When the Arcade Department Store was established, we were really becoming a metropolis, the forerunner of what we today designate as a "Mall," and the electric signs out in front coming on alternately gave this part of the town a decidedly new look. In walking downtown from the south end, where I lived, I most generally walked through the Arcade rather than on the outside of the block. One entered the Grocery, passed through the arch to the Bazaar, then to Dry Goods, Furniture, Men's Clothing and one came outside from the Shoe Store.

[illegible]

SLAUGHTER SALE!

New Bremen's New Department Store

"The Arcade"

getting ready to open their vast emporium. A general
Slaughter of Prices will prevail from now until
JANUARY 1ST, 1903.

SANTA CLAUS' HEADQUARTERS.

During the next 30 years the store was quite successful and the largest in this part of Ohio. By 1930 the president of the company was Alfred Rabe. The following excerpts are from a speech made by Mr. Rabe to a New Bremen Civic Club in December of 1939:

...And so The Arcade Department Store was founded in January, 1903, with seven stockholders. This list of stockholders has since grown to 68. One instance enables me to recall the opening day of the store. The New Bremen Band was hired to play for the day, and I can still see Otto Boesel sitting to the front of the band playing a slide trombone.

In the early years of the store, we conducted a pork packing business, but with the advent of the packing houses in the larger cities, this business was discontinued. We also operated a shoe store the first 20 years we were in business. The store thrived as it enjoyed the trade of the entire countryside. Those were the horse and buggy days, and people did not drive to the city to buy, and the local merchants could figure that the community would buy his wares. Today it is different, and the automobile is the small town merchant's worst competitor.

However, we have managed to survive all this, and are still on top. We have seen many of our fellow merchants throughout this territory succumb to the depression, but although the going was hard, we managed to survive.

Our store covers 15,000 square feet of sales floor, and we stock 275,000 salable items. We aim to carry our stocks complete, and have just as few "outs" as possible. We like to impress the public with the fact that you can enter our store, and do all your shopping under one roof...You can well imagine what a task it is to have just the merchandise in stock that the next customer will call for...If we fail you at times by not having the merchandise you call for, do not condemn us, but overlook our failing when you realize from our large stock of merchandise that we really try to supply the community. The Arcade Department Store is our contribution to keeping the home fires burning in New Bremen.

In 1946, Arlie E. Wiessinger took over the management of the Arcade Department Store and in 1950 the store underwent an extensive remodeling and modernization, with the front being of yellow and maroon porcelain-enamel and glass. In 1953, the Arcade closed and the buildings were sold to Crown Controls, Inc.



This framed display of the Arcade's remodeled departments can be seen at the Luelleman House Museum.



The early Arcade's Grocery Department.



The fronts of the buildings were remodeled in 1950.

To be successful for all those years The Arcade had to rely on many types of advertising. First were materials such as newspaper advertisements. The Arcade then went one step further and published a newsletter to the community.



Pictured here is a Good Luck Token. Made of metal, it measured about 1 1/4" in diameter. This type of advertising was very popular in the early 1900s until the 1930s. Tokens like this were given out by many businesses.



In our area the Glass Block Company in St. Mary's and Zofkie- Foos Company in Wapakoneta used the same Good Luck Token. The front of the token was used to advertise the business while the back was given to membership in the Don't Worry Club. In the center, good luck symbols were located within the swastika. (A large collection of these tokens can be viewed online at www.sageventure.com/coins/worry.html including the New Bremen Arcade token.)

It is interesting to note that the swastika was long used as a symbol of good luck until 1933 and its negative association with the Nazis in Germany.

Other items with The Arcade imprint can be viewed in our Museum. All of the items are considered vintage with many of them approaching antique status.



A few items with The Arcade imprint.

A page from the Arcade Visitor in 1920.



Margaret Boesel's New Bremen Connection

Margaret Boesel was not born in New Bremen, nor has she ever lived here, but she has a strong connection to the community. Margaret is the Great-Great-Granddaughter of Carl (Charles) & Sophia Maurer Boesel. Both her Great Grandfather Jacob

Boesel and Grandfather Otto Boesel were born in New Bremen. She remembers visiting relatives Emil & Ida (Boesel) Conradi and Elmer & Grace (Boesel) Ende and hearing family stories.

Her Grandparents, Otto & Bessie Stone Boesel, were NBHS graduates; Otto in the Class of 1901 and Bessie in the Class of 1898. After graduation from Ohio State University Law College, Otto opened a law office with Theodore H. Tangeman in New Bremen. In 1910 Tangeman moved to Wapakoneta to become the Auglaize County Prosecuting Attorney and Otto Boesel remained in New Bremen as its Mayor.

In 1913, Otto joined the law firm of Goeke, Anderson & Boesel and moved the family to Wapakoneta with their three sons Paul, Kenneth and Jacob.

Their father Otto died in December of 1940. Paul was Auglaize County Prosecuting Attorney (1929-1933) and then had joined a law firm in Lima. Both Kenneth and Jacob quit their jobs and entered the army. At that time you had to sign up for three years but after one year you could buy your way out. December 7, 1941 changed all that. Jacob became the Finance Officer in the Fourth Infantry Division, having to pay 15,000 soldiers each month in cash. He said that he sat in a room with guards and cash up to the ceiling.

After the war, Margaret's father, Jacob, returned to the U.S and enrolled in Law School at the University of Michigan. Jacob and his wife Wanda had three daughters Margaret, Barbara and Kathy. He had a long legal career and later became an Auglaize County judge.

Kenneth and his wife Louise with sons Peter and David settled in Pittsburgh where Kenneth became a prominent banker.

Margaret is proud of growing up in Auglaize County and of her New Bremen roots. She graduated from Wapakoneta High School and studied mathematics at Ohio University in Athens. She graduated with honors and went to work for IBM in 1967. She worked on mainframes and also in the Consulting Division. She retired from IBM in 1999.

She is pleased to have lots of friends in Florida, California and Chicago, and has been all over Europe and Latin America. Fluent in Spanish, she has been on numerous medical mission trips as interpreter in Mexico, Guatemala and Costa Rica.

Margaret's Grandma Boesel was a pianist and she had her own baby grand piano. Margaret's mother Wanda (McCullough) Boesel played the violin. Margaret started violin lessons at nine years old, taking lessons from Marcia Zofkie of Wapakoneta. After moving back to Ohio in 2000, Margaret took up the violin again. She often played hymns in the church and also played in two string quartets. She still takes lessons and says she just enjoys playing music.

Some of Margaret's memories of New Bremen:

It was peaceful and quiet and had very pretty homes. I remember the canal and stories about mules that walked along the edge pulling the canal boats. I remember Lock Two and the nearby German Protestant Cemetery. I heard the story that my Grandma fell into the canal once and Otto Boesel pulled her out. That is how they met!

My Grandma Boesel was Bessie Stone. Her father, Captain Michael Stone, entered the Civil War as a young man and fought there for four years. He saw so much carnage that when he came back in 1865 he became a physician. Her brother Tom Stone was an engineer and lived in Indiana. Her older sister Maud married Theodore Tangeman. But Maude died young of pneumonia while caring for her young son who had pneumonia. Her younger sister, Margaret (Tootie) married Al Kinley from Cleveland. She, too, died rather young after having an operation in the hospital that did not go well. Uncle Al used to visit my family in Akron when I was about eight years old.

The Stones were an English family, in the German community of New Bremen. Grandma Boesel said her father, Dr. Stone, would get the horse and buggy and take his kids with him to visit sick people in New Bremen. His kids spoke English, but they went to school with German kids and were thus fluent in both languages. They translated for their dad when he called on the sick people.

(For more information about Dr. Stone and his family, go to our website www.newbremenhistory.org and look in the archives for the Towpath, July, 2000 issue.)

We thank Margaret for taking the time to share her New Bremen connection. Her memories and Boesel/Stone family history are very interesting. This information is a valuable addition to our knowledge of early New Bremen history.



Paul & Dorothy Boesel with their children David & Judy.
Niece Margaret is standing in front of Paul. (1948)



David's parents, Marie Behm Meyers (NBHS Class of 1931), and husband Virgil settled in Columbus but made frequent trips to New Bremen to visit relatives. David has shared two more stories of his New Bremen memories.

A GRAVE MATTER

By David Meyers

Although I was born in Columbus, Ohio, my New Bremen roots run deep on both sides of my family. My great grandfather was Bernard Heinrich Wilhelm Meyer (1859-1905), who was married to Catherina Louise Nieter (1861-1903). He was born in German Township and she in St. Marys. His parents, Heinrich Wilbrandt Meyer (1828-1904) and Catharine Maria Elisabeth Brune (1833-1892), were pioneering residents of Auglaize County, as were her parents, John Bernard Brune (1807-1887) and Catherine Adelheid Hühne (1807-1890). All were farmers and, purportedly, prosperous ones.

Along with many of my relatives, Bernard and Catherina are buried in German Protestant Cemetery. Over time, their headstones began to tilt precariously as they sank slowly into the earth. If nothing was done about it, they undoubtedly would topple over. Consequently, one Memorial Day during the late 1950s or early 1960s, my father, Virgil Meyers, and his brothers, Kenny, Wally, and Kermit, decided they would undertake to fix the problem.

Kenny and Wally both lived in St. Marys, while the youngest brother, Kermit, had settled in Seattle, Washington, sometime after the war. But he made infrequent visits back to Ohio and this was such an occasion. (Their only sister, Delight, was married to Frederick Gilberg, the parents of frequent *Towpath* contributor Robert Gilberg.) Although I was just a young boy of ten or twelve, I tagged along with my father and his brothers while my mother, Marie Behm Meyers, visited with her sisters-in-law.

It was a beautiful spring day. I don't remember it being too hot, but the cooler of beer in the trunk of one of the cars—the consumption of beer being a birthright of their German heritage—ensured the men wouldn't go thirsty. I suspect I had a couple of bottles of soda pop to tide me over. They had also packed shovels, pry bars, trowels, a level, and the other equipment required for the task of pouring concrete footers for the headstones. My father took the lead because he was a builder all his life and threw himself enthusiastically into any project which allowed him to work with his hands.

I looked forward to any excuse to visit New Bremen. I didn't mind the two-hour drives up and down Route 33 from my home in Columbus. I greatly enjoyed visiting my relatives and catching glimpses of small town life. I particularly loved seeing the older buildings—the fire station, the opera house, the drug store, and the two old houses on the far end of South Washington that had once been owned by my great grandfather Friedrich “Fritz” Behm and had been converted into a carry-out. (He is in the well-known 1912 photograph of Civil War veterans on Decoration Day.) And eating at Curly Wint's was always a special treat because I felt as if I had stepped back in time.

But more than anything, I loved strolling through German Protestant Cemetery and seeing the old, weathered headstones, many of which bore the names of my ancestors. There were times I felt as though I were related to most of the people buried there and I tried to imagine what they had been like. I did not have those kind of roots in Columbus because my parents had moved there but a short time before I was born. However, in New Bremen, I had ties to people who had been there since the founding of the town. I had history.

As far as the business of straightening the tombstones was concerned, my role was as the gofer—to fetch tools or a bottle of beer. But I didn't mind. I was just happy to be in their company, sharing in their camaraderie and eavesdropping on their conversations. It was the only time in my life when I was alone with the patriarchs of the Meyers clan (the “s” had been added sometime in the 1930s.) My father was the eldest and it was clear they all respected him. After their father died, he had been the one who held the family together. All of them appreciated the sacrifices he had made on their behalf, ensuring that each one of them had educational opportunities he didn't. Even after my father passed away, they continued to tell me what a great man he had been.

The first order of business was to move the heavy headstones off their brick bases. If I remember correctly, we slid them onto a sheet of plywood. It took all of us to move each one far enough away from the brick base so that we could begin trying to level it. The original idea was to remove the bricks, which were laid row upon row, several layers deep, and then relay them. It was a simple matter to pry each brick up and toss it off to the side, so I was allowed to do much of the work because it was something I could manage. Besides, I was younger and closer to the ground.

I don't remember which grave it was, Bernard's or Catharina's, but something unexpected and alarming happened which forced us to jettison the original plan. A hole began to open up and the bricks started sliding into it. A number of terrifying scenarios began to play out in my pre-teen mind. But I wasn't alone. All of us had recoiled in horror.

Something had apparently collapsed. My thought was the casket had likely rotted away. I don't remember anyone saying anything, but we immediately began throwing the bricks back in, hoping that the quickly developing sink hole wouldn't swallow them all up. Fortunately, it didn't. Apparently, we had succeeded in filling it up. But we now had a depression. We had used up all the bricks, but the hole was still a foot or more deep.

So then the search was on to find more bricks or stones to build a firm base for our foundation. I believe we found a pile of stones stacked up beneath a tree and used some of them. My father and uncles then built a rectangular frame out of two by fours, mixed up the concrete, and poured a slab the width of the headstone. They then repeated this process for the second one.

Since it would have taken some time for the concrete to harden, I doubt they moved headstones onto the concrete slabs that day. Possibly, it was done the following day—assuming it was a Memorial Day weekend—or we might have returned a week later. But my father and his brothers had accomplished the task they set out to do and the headstones are still standing. However, my uncle Kenny, the second eldest, would not be around much longer, passing away late in 1963 at the age of fifty. My father would be next in 1980, followed by Kermit and, finally, Wally.

I was thirty-two when my father died in an accident on Christmas Day and suddenly I felt very old (my mother had succumbed to a rare illness three years earlier). Yet, I take comfort from my occasional walks through German Protestant Cemetery, knowing that it is all part of life's cavalcade and I have my own place in it. Perhaps, that is why I am driven to capture as much of my family history as I can—so I can leave a legacy for my daughter and my grandson and they will know that they, too, have roots in New Bremen.

FOR WANT OF A NAIL

By David Meyers

For want of a nail the kingdom was lost—or so goes the old proverb. When researching your family history, the absence of a single fact can sometimes stop you dead in your tracks. At other times, the discovery of a single fact can open the floodgates to more information. As the self-appointed genealogist for my family—(is there any other kind?)—I know both the joy and the sorrow regarding facts, elusive or otherwise.

Case in point. My Aunt Leora had the misfortune to be the eldest of seven children born to Johann Wilson Behm, my grandfather, and Ida Fredonia Koester, his wife. I say misfortune because she outlived her parents, her husband, one of her two children, and all of her siblings. To put it simply, she didn't think it was fair. Perhaps that is

why her focus to the end of her life was on the living, not the dead.

I, on the other hand, plied her with endless questions about my New Bremen ancestors because she was the only one left who could possibly know the answers. My grandfather had spent the last three years of his life in her home, and, as a result, she had acquired photos, letters, and documents that would have aided me in my quest. However, they were not organized in any fashion and I only got to see a few of them.

On one visit to her home in Dayton, I found a few photos on her back porch where she kept the trash before putting it out to be collected. They were scattered on the floor near the door. When I asked her how they happened to be there, she replied they must have fallen out of the trash can.

"You were throwing them away?"

"Yes," she replied, "I didn't think anyone would want those old things."

Those old things. I love old things. Always have. I live in an old house. I have surrounded myself with antique furniture. I prefer old books, old records, old movies—and, most of all, old relatives.

"Aunt Leora, please don't throw anything like that out before checking with me," I told her. But by that time, most of the real "treasures" had disappeared, including a floor model Zenith radio complete with short wave. When I was a child, I used to sit with my ear against it, intently listening for other countries.

One of the relatives I was seeking information about was my great grandmother, Catharina Caroline Schonefeld (1809-1894). She was originally married to my gg grandfather, Johann Christian Behm (1802-1855), but he either died shortly after they arrived in the United States or on the boat coming over. All I knew for sure about her is that she had been born in Steinhausen, Mecklenburg, Germany, and she had a fascinating name. From what little German I had retained from college, I knew that Schonefeld meant "beautiful field."

To my disappointment, Leora didn't really want to talk about Caroline. I assumed that was because she had died before Leora was born so she did not have any direct knowledge of her. Every time I brought up one of my deceased ancestors, she would dismiss my questions. "I don't know why you are interested in dead people," she would say. "You need to pay more attention to the living"—or something like that. The clear message was that she didn't want to talk about them.

Through a bit of good fortune, I drove to New Bremen one day from my home in Columbus. I don't know exactly why, but I decided to pay a visit to St. Paul Evangelical Church. As I pulled up, the new pastor—I don't remember his name—was outside loading something

into his car. I told him I was hoping to look at some old church records because I knew many of my relatives had belonged to that congregation.

Amazingly, the pastor told me he had just found several boxes of old records in the attic of the parsonage which he was thinking of donating to the New Bremen library because these were Lutheran records and he was with the Church of Christ. He allowed me to search through them for an hour or so and I located some information regarding Caroline—namely that she had remarried. Her new husband was Friedrich Joachim Christian Mueller (1814-1857). They had a couple of children, but then Friedrich died. Two years later, she married again, this time to Johann Friedrich Hilgemann (1819-1901). They also had a child. Her third husband outlived her by a few years.

As it turned out Caroline had been an active member of the St. Paul Ladies Aid Society. However, she had passed away at the age of eighty-four—one of the oldest women in the community—following a lengthy illness. According to her obituary in the *New Bremen Sun*, she had eleven children with Christian Behm. I know that two of them died in the Civil War. My great grandfather, Friedrich “Fritz” Behm, also served in the Union army, but, fortunately for me, survived.

It was common knowledge in the Behm family that the surname had changed, but from what they didn’t know. I subsequently learned from a distant cousin who went to Germany to conduct research that the family name was originally Behnke or Behnck. He also learned that Christian and Caroline Behm had emigrated on March 31, 1852, from Alt Karin through Hamburg aboard the ship *William Ash*. They landed not in the United States, but in Quebec, Canada. My cousin suspects that Christian might have died there because of the terrible conditions in the port of Quebec. Whatever the reason, there is no further mention of him in the record.

Because many of the Behms, Barths, Meyers, Nieters, Sprains, Koesters, Brunes, and others that I am related to either by blood or marriage—even the Hilgemanns—are buried in German Protestant Cemetery, I expected that would be Caroline’s final resting place, too. But it isn’t. Through the church records I learned she had been interred in Plank Road Cemetery. So I went looking for it. At that time, Plank Road Cemetery was heavily overgrown. Attempts had been made to clear the brush and mow the weeds, but many of the headstones had fallen over and there was a broken stack of them along what I assumed was a fence line.

Today it stands in an open field, but at that time “Karoline” Hilgemann’s marker was in a clump of weeds. It was the summer of the first infestation of the Japanese beetle—the ladybug lookalikes that are known for the fact that they bite—that I first happened upon her grave. And

one side of the stone obelisk was completely covered with the beetles, as were several others, including an iron Union army marker which had been broken and bent by the mower. I remembered taking a picture so I could show it to my Aunt Leora the next time I visited her.

On my next trip to Dayton, I took Leora out to eat at one of the many smorgasbords Dayton used to be famous for. As we were dining, I pulled out the photo and said, “Looked what I found.”

“What is it?” she asked.

So I told her it was the grave of Caroline Schonefeld Behm Mueller Hilgemann. “It’s in Plank Road Cemetery,” I said.

“Oh, I knew that,” she replied.

Thanks, a lot, I thought. She could have saved me a lot of trouble. But I loved her anyway. I just wish she had understood why family history was so important to me.



The Plank Road Cemetery is located on State Route 274 west of New Bremen near the Bunker Hill Industrial Park. In October 1853, trustees of a “St. John’s” Church bought one acre of land for \$100 in the NW corner of the East half of the NW quarter of Section 15, Twp. 7 South, Range 4 East. Conveyance records show that in May 1856, property in this same area was sold to “N.B. & Ft. R. Plank Road Co.” The first burial recorded for this one-acre “Plank Road Cemetery” was for August Andreas Schulte, who died 1/10/1860. The last recorded burial was Philip Wolff, who died 9/27/1938. Burials in this listing were recorded in the 1970s from then-existing tombstones, along with information recorded in church records. The landscaped sign, flag, etc. was created by Andy Topp as an Eagle Scout project ca. 2003. Prior to that, there was no sign to identify the cemetery. [History by Lucille Francis]



HISTORY MYSTERY

**In the January 2020 issue of The Towpath we asked:
This is the NBHS building in 1920. Where was it located?**

HERE IS THE ANSWER!



Central (Union) School was built in 1878 to be both the grade school and the high school.



It became the Central Grade school in 1920 when Central High School was built on the NW corner of the school property. A limited view of the high school is visible on the right side of this photo.



This photo shows a full view of the 1920 Central High School. There were two rooms on each floor and two rooms in the basement.

The 1920 high school building, known popularly as the “Cigar Box,” was erected to solve the overcrowding in the Central (Union) School, but soon proved to be inadequate. With larger numbers of high school students each year it became evident that the building lacked needed classroom space, an assembly room and a gym for competitive sports. Though the School Board rented space at the Boesel Opera House for assemblies and Hespe Hall for basketball games, this was not a convenient or satisfactory answer to the problem.

All attempts to pass a bond issue for a new building failed until 1928 for the new high school building on Walnut Street. It is thought that the sinking south wall due to quicksand of the 1920 building may have helped convince the voters to approve the bond issue for a new and adequate building for their students.

Groundbreaking for the new high school building on South Walnut Street was in March, 1929, and the building was completed that year in December. The students moved into the building in January, 1930.



New Bremen High School 1930-1999



WHO IS THIS?

**Dr. Ferdinand F.
Fledderjohann
(1876-1967)**

New Bremen Physician

**New Bremen Board of
Education**

Thursday Afternoon, June 11, 1953

FAITHFUL SERVANT TO A WHOLE COMMUNITY

Back in 1928 Dr. F. F. Fledderjohann had his first real vacation in a long, long time. Now, twenty-five years later, he is recapturing the well-deserved luxury a second time in the same way—he has gone back to Philadelphia to be present at the reunion of the class with which he graduated from Jefferson Medical College in 1903.

Soon after receiving his license for the practice of medicine, dated July third of that year, Dr. Fledderjohann, a native of the New Bremen-New Knoxville area, returned here to open his first and only office. Fifty years ago! There were no paved highways, the automobile was thought a strange device with an uncertain future, telephones still were more or less a novelty in many rural sections, and other inventions which brought about the miracle of present-day living were undreamed of then. It was under those conditions the new doctor, fortified by the confidence of youth and an abiding faith in his newly inked diploma, began the career that was to make him one of the best beloved figures in the community.

Neither winter's cold nor summer's heat was too severe for him to answer the call of the sick. With his faithful horse, he spent long hours on country roads and bumpy by-passes to reach those in need of his services. No matter how trying the day or how tedious the night, he was always ready to meet each new emergency. Never interested in accumulating too large a store of worldly goods, his unselfish service proved his worth as a family friend and comforting counselor. His advice and aid was sought as much by the well as the sick and he could have had many proffered positions of public trust but limited himself to those within his church and the public schools, two fields in which he was more than ably qualified by training and temperament.

At an age when others live mostly with their dreams of yesteryear, Dr. Fledderjohann continues to carry on and build new dreams for the future. As a physician and as a private citizen he deserves the acclaim and gratitude of a community he has served faithfully and honestly through several generations.

Memories of Dr. Fledderjohann

By Genevieve Conradi

Dr. F.F. Fledderjohann was the son of Herman Heinrich & Katherine (Wellman) Fledderjohann. He was the youngest of ten children born to this couple.

He married Emma Sophie Bierbaum in 1905. They had three children- Orlando, Elodie and Norman. The boys grew to adulthood but Elodie was stricken ill with pneumonia at the age of 19 months and died. To add to the heartache of the family, Emma, wife and mother, died in 1918 with influenza.

Dr. Fledderjohann was still delivering babies at home in the early 1940s. My mother said that James Schroer and I were some of the last babies that he delivered. In 1943 he was 67 years old. He was still seeing patients in his office in the 1950s. Joyce Ruedebusch described how he examined children for swimming lessons. She was instructed to hop on one leg across the room and back. He then listened to her heart and signed the permission slip.

Max Fledderjohann said that "Uncle Ferd" (Dr. Fledderjohann) was not a good driver and often his nephew Walter Fledderjohann, would drive him where he needed to go.

Joyce, Max and I remember his office at 9 S. Main Street. The front door entered into the waiting room. A strong odor of cigar smoke lingered in the air. A large sturdy table was located in the middle of the room and chairs were placed along the walls on both sides. There were a few old newspapers and magazines on the table. A picture of dogs playing poker hung on the wall.

He did not have a receptionist or nurse. He would open the office door and ask who was next to be seen. In his office, there was a heating stove in the NW corner, an examining table in the NE corner and a medicine room on the south wall. Pills and cough medicines were dispensed by the doctor himself from this room. Straight ahead to the west was the door to the backyard. Max remembers a large desk and bookcase near the door.

Dr. Fledderjohann and his granddaughter Martha in 1945.

When I was about 7 years old I received a laceration to my left knee while riding on my cousin's scooter. My mother brought me to Dr. Fledderjohann because stitches were needed. This was before Joint Township hospital was built. I must have been resistive



because he called in a man off the street to help. He was close to 75 years old at the time and still practicing medicine.

Dr. Fledderjohann and my mother always conversed in German. I remember him telling her about chlorophyll that had become popular. (Chlorophyll fad of the early 1950s.) He recited a little poem in German and then he repeated it in English. "Why reeks the goat on yonder hill, when he feeds all day on Chlorophyll?"



Corner of Main & Monroe Streets. Dr. Fledderjohann's first house and office on the SW corner of the intersection. The house was razed in 1936 and replaced with a gas station.

Another memory comes from Robert Gilberg and his story entitled "The Carbide Cannon Incident." (*The entire story can be read on our website in the Towpath, April 2013.*) In this excerpt, four restless and bored 15 year old boys attempt to build a carbide cannon on a hot summer afternoon. When all their attempts failed they dumped the rest of the carbide into an old cistern which caused one of the boys to be injured. They immediately thought of taking him to Dr. Fledderjohann who they trusted.

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.

**What memories do you have of Dr. Fledderjohann?
We hope you will share them with us.**

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

New Bremen, Ohio 45869-0073



NBHA Museum – 120 N. Main St.

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History Mystery

(Answer: Betty Holdren Quellhorst, Joan Quellhorst Klier, June Hirschfeld Hegemier, Barbara Harmony Moore, Beverly Rump Miller Plattner)



**NBHS Cheerleaders in the school year
1950-51.**

Who are they?

UPCOMING NBHA EVENTS

We plan to open the Luelleman House & the Pape House the 4th Sunday of each month from April through Oct, 1-3 PM.

The museums can also be opened at other times by appointment.

(Call any NBHA board member with your request.)

The NBHA ANNUAL DINNER MEETING was postponed in March due to the coronavirus pandemic and will be rescheduled.

UPCOMING NEW BREMEN EVENTS

Firemen's Picnic July 25, 2020

Bremenfest August 14-16, 2020

Pumpkinfest September 25&26, 2020