



THE TOWPATH

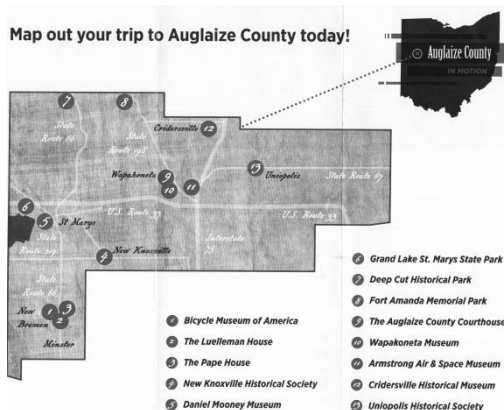
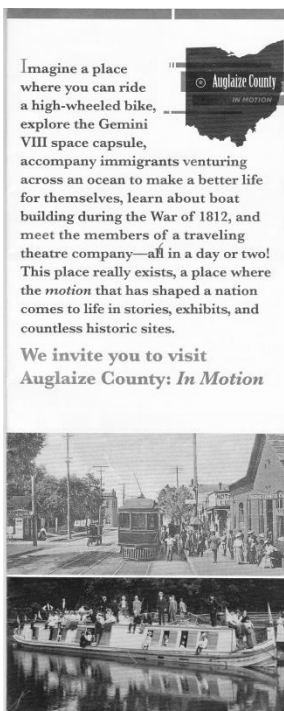
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THE NEW BREMEN HISTORIC ASSOCIATION
July 2017

AUGLAIZE COUNTY: IN MOTION!

A goal of the **AUGLAIZE COUNTY: IN MOTION!** project is to promote visitation of the many sites that reflect the theme of motion. The Auglaize County Historical Society under the direction of Rachel Barber has developed two ways to meet this goal. To gain interest in the project large banners depicting the sites have been displayed in venues across the area. Then to build on this interest a brochure was printed that invites you to visit **AUGLAIZE COUNTY: IN MOTION!** The brochure contains a map and pictures with information about the sites.

We are proud that four of the sites are located in New Bremen. The Bicycle Museum of America and the Miami & Erie Canal Lock One, along with our Luelleman House and Pape House Museums are participating in the project. To encourage visitation our museums will be open from April through October on the fourth Sunday of each month from 1 to 4 pm. As always tours can be arranged at other times by contacting a Board Member.

We hope the publicity from the banners and brochures bring us many visitors as they enjoy a trip to Auglaize County!



“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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NEW MEMBERS

Alex Price

Patricia Duffy

MEMBER DEATHS

JoAnn Lampert (3/20/2017)

Carl E. Roediger CM (5/15/2017)

(CM=Charter Member LM=Life Member)

DONATIONS

Karl & Ethel Mesloh

Curtis & Ruth Brookhart

Stanley & Dorothy Hirschfeld

MEMORIAL DONATIONS

In Memory of Lowell Roettger by Nancy Parsons

In Memory of Carl Roediger by Larry Elsoff, Roberta Tanzini, Lee & Julia Koch, Gen Conradi, Dennis Dicke, Diane & Larry Dicke, Avalon & Richard Miller, Grace & Gene Roediger, and others.

In Memory of Carl & Melba Roediger by Sue & Jerry Maxson

2017 Monthly Raffle Winners

April- \$100 Robert Klein (St. Marys), \$75 Jim Nagel (NB), \$50 Dave Waterman (NB)

May- \$100 Chris Kuck (NB), \$75 Brad Verhoff (NB), \$50 Duane Dammeyer (Ojai, CA)

June- \$100 Tanner This (NB), \$75 Emily Reisner (Durham, NC), \$50 Jeff Heckman (NB)

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

ITEMS RECENTLY DONATED TO MUSEUM

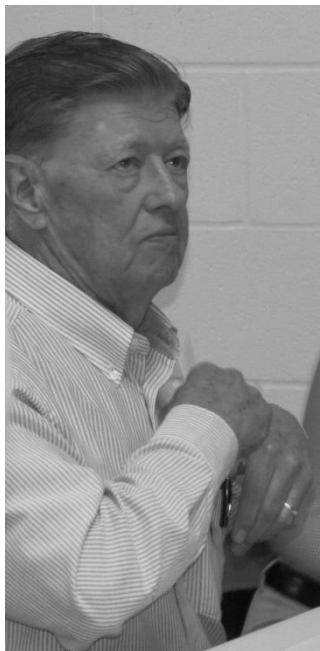
Korean War photo album, NB American Legion pins, NB sports pins **by Lucille Francis**; Zion Church 50th Anniversary book **by Phyllis Hehr**; 1929-30 basketball picture **by Dick Howell**; 1910 NB postcard **by Ben Ivins**; NB blanket, salt cellars, butter pat dishes, toothpick holder **by Alberta Ahlers Loffer**; 3 pairs Seiberling rubber gloves made in New Bremen **by Ned & Judy Scheer**; McGuffey Reader **by Donald & Margaret Seyfried**; Various NB school items, Mueller family photos and Mueller Bros. business items **by Kay Shapiro**; Fire District map circa 1950 **by NB Fire Department**; Garmhausen Genealogy **by Betsy & Stephen Hunter**.

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)



CARL E. ROEDIGER

Carl E. Roediger died on May 15, 2017 after a long battle with cancer. Both Carl and his wife Melba were Charter Members of the New Bremen Historic Association and served as trustees. Melba died in 1998. Carl accepted a position as trustee in 2000 and has served faithfully until his death. He was in charge of “inside maintenance” and provided many hours of volunteer service. He built

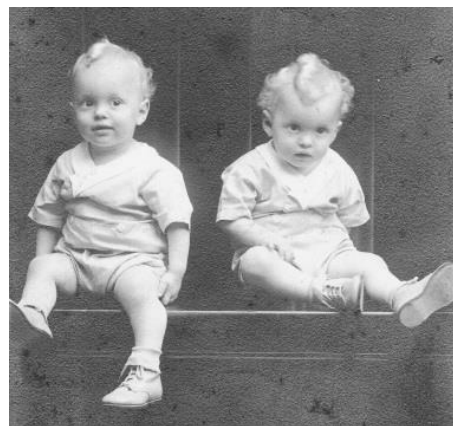
cabinets and could fix anything that needed to be fixed in both the Luelleman House and the Pape House. He rarely missed a board meeting and provided thoughtful advice. We are thankful for his service and will miss him greatly.

place to have “roots”. Also enjoyed the articles, especially the one on twins. Thanks for doing the article and all the work you put into the research. Nice to have others know what a talented man he was. **Kay Switzer, Lexington, Kentucky** (*Daughter of Bud Kettler*)



We are proud grandparents of handsome twin grandsons, Isaac & Brian Halker... They weighed under four pounds each and were 16 inches long and stayed for a few days in the NICU. They are now thriving 11 year olds. They like to play baseball and are both in Scouts and are servers in church. They are wonderful boys and we love them very much. **Roberta Strahm Halker, Pandora, Ohio**

Bev (Rump) Plattner shared a picture of twins **Ralph & Rich Plattner:**



LETTERS

Thank you for accepting the New Bremen Foundry & Machine Company drainage tile for your museum. It was interesting to have found it among father's possessions. We really don't know where it came from but I assume that it came from the farm located in the northeast corner of Willshire Township, Van Wert County, Ohio. **Beth Keuneke, St. Marys, Ohio**

...The Lone Pine gas station was across the street from my Uncle Specky (Harold Speckman)... I also remember that people had to put books in the oven to heat before they could be taken back to school when we were kids. **Linda Coble Jones, Yorktown, Indiana**

Thank you so much for sending me the copy of the Towpath. It is a delightful publication. The Historic Association is lucky to have you. Thank you for all your work on the article on my dad. It was a nice article and it was a pleasure to see him recognized. I loved the pictures you chose. I also enjoyed the article on twins! **Kathie Clower, Fernandina, Florida** (*Daughter of Bud Kettler*)

Got the April edition of the Towpath. Thank you. The article on Bud Kettler was delightful. You did a great job. A nice trip down memory lane. New Bremen is a great



On April 22, 2017, Stephen & Betsy (Garmhausen) Hunter visited New Bremen and gave Tom Braun a copy of the Garmhausen genealogy prepared by Louise Whitehurst. This comprehensive volume can be read at the New Bremen Library.

IMMIGRATION TO AMERICA

This article is an excerpt from the autobiography of Joel Epstein. It describes his immigration to the United States in 1913. We found his description gave us a better understanding of the momentous journey made by many of our ancestors.

Joel Epstein, father of Sandra Epstein Conradi, began writing his autobiography in 1971 when he turned 66 years old. He wanted his family to know about his early experiences growing up and immigrating to the United States.

In spite of the lapse of time from his immigration until he began writing this account, he remembered and described the intense emotions and feelings of those emigrating and those left behind. It reminds us that our ancestors who came from somewhere and left loved ones behind may have had such feelings. Joel also describes the conditions on the ship and hardships during this journey which reminds of the travails experienced by our ancestors.

Joel & Fae Epstein enjoyed visiting New Bremen with their daughter Sandra and son-in-law Edward Conradi.

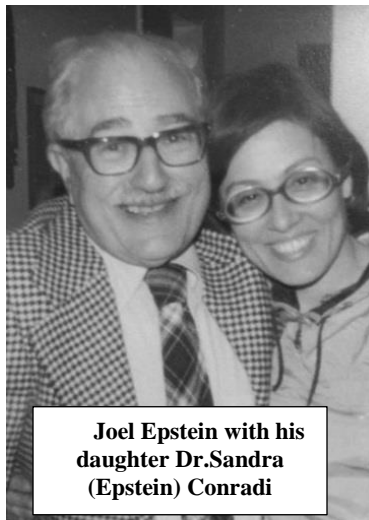


Standing: Joel Epstein, Sandra Epstein Conradi, Fae Epstein, Marge Lietz, Paul Lietz Seated: Karen Conradi, Elsie Gieseke (1976 in New Bremen)

Autobiography begins

Even as I begin, I realize that this project will take a long, long time. It can never be finished because life is never ended until death. It will be slow going because only in spare moments and between other activities will I be able to write. It also will take time to open my chest of memories before putting my thoughts on paper. I shall try to be as factual and truthful as is humanly possible without aggrandizement, without embellishment and without exaggeration.

Now, I begin the story going back to 1905 when I was born. You know, of course, that the country of my birth was Russia. Although I know the general region in Russia where I was born, I never did learn the exact village nor its name. I do not know because my parents never told me, nor did I ever think of asking them. Nor did I ever learn the exact date in English of my birth. My mother told us our birthdays using the Hebrew calendar. I think she mentioned fifteen days in the month of *Tamus*. I suppose I can search and learn its equivalent in



Joel Epstein with his daughter Dr. Sandra (Epstein) Conradi

English. I do not think it's that important at this late date. Anyway, I chose July 15th as being close enough, *Tamus* and July being the same period in both calendars.

Like most Jews living in Czarist Russia, my mother was in constant fear for her life and naturally, for her dear ones. My father left for the United States in 1910 when I was five. When my sister Rose left for the United States in 1911, I must have been six years old. I remember the horse-drawn carriage which took her away from us. I wanted to go with her and I raised a hue and cry. I was led away with the

promise that she would soon return to get me. My sister must have been about 13 or 14 years old when my father sent her the passage tickets and money. A friend of the family, I do not remember her name, was to be her foster mother and take care of her. Not much more comes to mind about Rose's departure except that my mother heard by letter, months later of her safe arrival.

After my father and sister Rose left, we lived in two different homes in Streshin. I have vivid memories of Streshin. Along the *strelka* or creek, my uncle and aunt had a large house for a very large family; I think six or seven daughters and only one son. Along muddy roads but not too far from this house, my mother had a room for all of us - Leah, Sonya and me. Rose had already left for the United States to join my father.

The room we lived in at that time was situated on a small farm as I recall watching a few cows being milked and the courtyard where many chickens and ducks wandered around. I seem to recall the barnyard noises and smells. For unknown reasons, my mother moved to another room just before we all left for America. As I said, we were always moving. This nomadic life continued even in New York where in a period of four or five years, we moved six or seven times.

Scenes as we leave Russia

Our poor blind grandmother, two of our aunts (our mother's sisters), our mother and we, her three children huddled in a dark, cold room somewhere in Streshin waiting for our sleigh conveyance to drive us away from this area of the earth forever. Streshin was the place where we had all spent our infancy. It was like a vigil before death. It was inevitable, heart-breaking and so, so sad for us all. My mother and her loving family undoubtedly knew in their souls that forevermore they never would see one another again. I recall the murmured talk going on between my grandmother, my aunts and mother between sobs, embraces and kisses in the dusk of the one lantern lit, bundle heaped room. My grandmother hugged us, especially me, kept kissing us and I am sure, blessed us in her silent and open prayers. It was really heart-rending when you consider that she was totally blind.

Obviously, none slept that eventful night, I don't remember whether my sisters and I also wept, as we should have done. It seems to me that we children were sad but did not realize the drama in which we were the principals until much, much later

in our lives. Only later did we feel the poignancy of the situation.

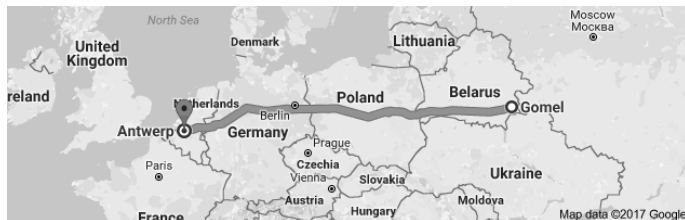
The horse drawn sleigh, towards dawn, arrived. The baggage was loaded on the sleigh by the driver. After much hugging and kissing, we children were placed in the sleigh and wrapped in blankets against the bitter cold. Then and only then did the lamenting and sobbing become voluble. The bitter cries of my mother, my mother's sisters and especially my grandmother still ring in my ears. But time has no ability to stop because of sadness or even happiness. It relentlessly keeps moving on. And so we left.

We all must have fallen asleep, except perhaps my mother, whose heart must have been breaking in grief. At long last we arrived at our destination in the city of Gomel. To my young and unexplored mind this must have seemed the largest place in the world. In fact, however, it was a small town.

The reason we stopped here soon became apparent. Doctors and a hospital existed in the town. We resided with another sister of my mother whose name I do not recall. The United States Government required that all immigrants be in good health, especially that eye diseases not exist. In Gomel was a Health Clinic where it was possible to obtain a Certificate of Health. Three of us, my mother, my sister Sonya and I were found to be in acceptable conditions but my sister Leah required eye treatment. As if my mother did not have enough trouble, this gave her quite a scare. At first it was thought she had trachoma, a serious disease. What a relief to learn later that it was only a suspicion. After several visits, the doctor finally also gave Leah her certificate of good health. What a scare but what a relief!

With all this happening, it never entered our minds to be amazed at our mother's ability to handle everything all by herself – three active children, the baggage, the documents, finding the proper train, etc. And yet she managed. When one realizes that my mother was illiterate, never having learned to read or write, what she accomplished during this period of her life is truly amazing.

Again, but to a much lesser sense of tragedy, we said farewell to Mom's sister with whom we lived while in Gomel. I am sorry that I have never learned her name because she must have been very kind to us. And so we left Russia by train to our port of departure. I think it was Antwerp, Belgium. I have very little memory of this train ride. I think we slept a lot on the train because I do remember our arrival at a huge shed on a pier but nothing in between. From this pier we were to board the ship which would take us to the United States across the stormy Atlantic Ocean.



From Gomel to Antwerp - 1133 miles

We must have spent several days on the pier waiting for the ship to arrive, fuel up and board the cargo and passengers. During this hiatus, Leah was placed in charge of watching

Sonya and me. She was all of eleven years old. Mother was busy running here and there, from one official to another having our papers, passports and documents examined and approved. We did not dare move about for fear of getting lost and so stayed, ate and slept in this spot among our bundles. Here, however, we discovered two taste experiences. Someone, it must have been a very kind person, gave us our very first orange (*Pulchina* in Russian) and our first taste of ice cream (*Gelata* in Russian). These delightful tastes still linger in my taste buds memory, believe it or not.

Crossing the Atlantic (1913)

Finally we embarked on the ship. At that time it must have seemed huge. However, in retrospect, it must have been quite small. I recall the excitement, hustle and bustle and din of going up the gangplank holding onto my mother's skirt, while she carried our bundles. Leah led Sonya. It was February and bitterly cold. We must have been glad to get into our bunk.

I may not remember our departure from the pier well but I do recall quite vividly our life on board ship. We had one bunk in a large dormitory. Men and women were domiciled in separate sections of the ship. I slept with mother and my sisters, being too small to be separated. The bunks were three tiers high. We lived in the middle bunk. The dormitory which housed at least 100 persons was never clean or sanitary. It was terribly crowded and stank from vomit and excrement. In such an environment, it is not surprising that soon we were all infested with lice and bed-bugs.

The routine of living on board ship was monotonous and boring. The same every day for the 19 days it took the ship to cross from Europe to the United States. In the morning for breakfast my mother, when she was well, or by some kind person when she was ill, would serve us some bread and butter and tea and that was all. There was no fruit, sometimes a thick porridge but no coffee and no milk. When we had oatmeal, it had a light covering of sugar for sweetening to make it palatable. For lunch, both meals were identical; we had a fixed menu, herring and boiled potatoes or boiled potatoes and herring. Hard boiled eggs were added from time to time for variety. And of course, tea and bread and butter was also served. How anyone survived the terrible ocean crossing for 19 rolling and pitching days with the diet served now surprises me.

The trip took about three weeks, almost continuously through storms and rough seas, at least we thought so because of the motion we felt of the ship and the prevailing sea-sickness. Besides the meager rations of poor food, my sisters and mother suffered from sea-sickness almost continuously. Only I was never seasick to this very day.

The large space in the hold of the ship was filled with three-tiered bunks, as I mentioned before. All port holes, if there were any were covered because we were at water level, if not below the water. There was no air conditioning or fans. Our only source of air was from the gangways leading to the upper decks. When the doors were closed, it was stifling and overwhelming. Fainting was a usual occurrence. All in all we were herded in like cattle and usually treated as such. Incidentally, the room was poorly lighted by lanterns scattered around. I dread the thought of the panic and loss of life had

there been a fire. Thank goodness such conditions are gone forever.

After we arrived and sometime later my mother related that there were fatalities. Those who died, my mother said, were buried at sea. I suppose there was no facility to carry a corpse on the crowded ship. The anguish and mourning of the survivors, I imagine, was heart-rending. Fortunately, I was too young to understand the grief.

At long last we approached Sandy Hook on the New York Harbor where a United States Pilot and Customs and Health Officers boarded the ship. All the doors and gangways were left open for inspection, I expect. What an opportunity for children who have been restricted to quarters for so long to take off and get into mischief. That is exactly what Leah and I did. We went to explore the rest of the ship without our mother's knowledge or consent.

We walked out and up the stairways while Mother was busy repacking her meager belongings. Soon we came out into the open air on an upper deck. We visited the 1st and 2nd class areas and were awe-stricken with what appeared to us unimaginable rich accommodations. Some of the wealthy passengers gave us cookies and candies which we devoured before they could change their minds. We must have looked, as we actually were, two ragged emaciated, disheveled babies. It felt so good; we must have strolled along leisurely and lingered at places which interested us.

In the meantime, the Customs and Immigration officials started to examine the documents of the passengers. It must have been then that Mother and Sonya missed us. Imagine Mother's reaction to our absence. She was absolutely frantic. All kinds of horrible thoughts must have entered her mind, like perhaps we fell overboard. Actually, Leah and I started to go back to our dungeon but were hopelessly lost. As usual, I started to cry and scream. A ship steward soon noticed us and asked us where our mother was located but neither of us knew how to tell him, we were so frightened. The sailor took us to an officer's cabin where we were, at least, quieted. After what seemed to me a very long time Mother was lead into the cabin by an Officer. Imagine the scene of reunion! Everyone was crying and talking at the same time. With that incident, we arrived in the land of milk, honey and golden paved streets, as we were told to expect.

Slowly but surely the ship inched into her berth on the New Jersey side of the Port. We were transferred with our baggage into a tender which sailed to a pier at the famous, infamous to some, Castle Garden. Castle Garden is the name given to a huge building that was built on an island in the New York Harbor which in the days past was used to process and examine all immigrants entering into the United States coming from Europe.

Arrival in New York

As the tender approached the imposing building we noticed crowds of people silently awaiting their loved ones. We disembarked at a floating, bridge-like pier on which we had to walk to the entrance of the building. This scene is especially impressed on my mind; the eager arriving people and the no less eager relatives and friends who were waiting in anticipation. Leah, Sonya and I held onto our Mother really not knowing what to expect, but I suppose, with much curiosity.

Our father and sister Rose were among the crowd of people waiting for their beloved, probably long separated from one another. When we landed on solid ground, people surged forward to hug, kiss, cry and laugh out of sheer happiness and release of tensions. It was a joyous reunion for us too, except for one disturbing incident. Leah let out a scream and yelled so everyone heard and turned towards us. "This man," pointing to our Dad, "is not our Father!" She had heard stories somewhere that strange men sometimes pose as relatives and then abduct them to fate too horrible to mention – White Slavery! Leah who always did speak loudly, now in terror could be heard near and far. Soon a crowd gathered around wondering what was causing the commotion. Were we embarrassed! My sister Rose whom Leah recognized took matters into her hands and soon mollified the disturbed Leah, at least she quieted her down so we could proceed into the large hall of Castle Garden to await our turn to be examined by the Health Officers and Immigration Officials. Even then Leah was not sure that Papa was not an imposter.

One could hardly blame my sister Leah for being terrified by our Father. When he left Russia, she remembered a thin, heavily black-bearded man. Before us was a fat clean-shaven one. Leaving Russia my father must have weighed about 140 pounds. Now he appeared to be over 200 pounds. Being as tall as I at about 5 feet and 3 ½ inches, one can imagine what a large belly he sported. The change was enough to cause an adult to doubt his identity, no less a child who pictured her father like when she last saw him leaving for the United States some three years before our arrival. Neither Sonya nor I remembered him at all but Mother knew him for what he was – her husband and our father. However, we all recognized our sister Rose and that saved the day.

When Leah and the commotion she created subsided, the first thing Father did was to take the fur hat I was wearing, called a *Kutzmah*, off my head and threw it into the Hudson River. In its place he put a stocking hat which was in vogue at that time, over my head. Why Papa threw the fur hat away, I don't know, but I must admit that the multi-colored stocking hat felt good and comfortable.



Joel Epstein and his sisters Rose, Sonya and Leah in 1963.

After the exciting greeting with Father and my sister Rose, Mama, Leah, Sonya and I were herded into a line. The line was fenced into place by barriers so that no one could jump his or her place. After what seemed to take a long, long time, we reached the officials sitting in offices behind open windows. Here, again, our documents were checked and our Hebrew

names translated into English. Mama kept worrying that Leah would voice her suspicion that Papa was an imposter, so she kept warning Leah not to talk. Fortunately Leah heeded the warning.

Finally, with an interpreter translating for Mama, we were permitted to pass customs and immigration. We were not finished yet. We still had to pass Health Inspection, so we were ushered into another room. Here matters were not so pleasant. We saw some people crying probably because they could not pass inspection for one reason or another. Those were quite dejected and mournful. Later we learned that some were refused admittance because of ill health or some communicable disease. Those were held in quarantine until a decision was made whether to provide a cure or to be deported. I still feel sorry for those poor tortured innocent people.

As for the Epstein family, we were cleared at long last to enter the gates of the land of liberty. We had arrived at Sandy Hook in the early morning; it was quite dark when we were finished with the red tape. Now we rejoined Father and Rose and proceeded to a small ferry boat which took us from Castle Garden to the Battery, Manhattan. To my young and inexperienced eyes, what I saw was a fairyland of many bright lights. It was beautiful and awesome.

At the Battery, Father took us on an elevated train, these are now gone forever. We traveled a short distance where we transferred to another elevated train headed to our new home in Brownsville, Brooklyn. Through the entire ride, I looked out of the windows being fascinated by the many, many glittering lights we passed. What a wonderful greeting to one who for so long saw only kerosene lamps and lanterns.

After what seemed to me a very short ride we arrived at our destination – Glenmore Avenue station. From the station, I recall, we walked a few blocks in a rather dark and dingy area before we reached our new home. It was a drab brick apartment house but to me it looked like a palace at that time. We climbed three floors of stairs before we arrived at our apartment.

Before we could enter, in the hallway, we were again greeted by all our aunts, Father's sisters - Aunts Bayla, Rachael, Bessie, his sister-in-law and many, many cousins. It was a warm welcome. Everyone had tears in her eyes. Of course, the hugging and kissing was all pervasive.

But the pangs of hunger were making our stomachs grumble despite our fascination with the novel surroundings. Food was there on the large kitchen table but we had to wait. First, our aunts undressed us completely and placed our lice infested clothes into paper bags for later disposal. Then in turn we were placed into a warm watered bath tub. We were lousy, literally speaking, especially in the hair of our heads. After a vigorous and good sudsing with perfumed soap, our heads were doused in kerosene to kill the nits, we were told. We smelled from perfumed soap and stank from kerosene simultaneously. It was quite late before we were permitted to sit at the table and eat. By now we were ravenous.

We were so tired I don't remember getting into bed. It was so comfortable, after the trip on the ship. I think I would not have slept at all were I not so exhausted. The mattress was of cheap quality but to us it was luxurious. Even more marvelous were the new, clean pillow cases and sheets and we were

covered by clean quilts. All in all we felt we were transported to a land full of magic and conveniences.

Joel grew to adulthood close to his family in New York State. He and Fae were married and had two daughters, Rosalie and Sandra.

Joel engaged in the travel business and became known as an expert in the field. He and Fae enjoyed traveling and guiding others to explore the world which he continued to do until his death in 1982.



Fae & Joel in their office at Joel Epstein Travel, Inc. in Hudson, New York.

Joel Epstein's autobiography is a wonderful legacy for his family and everyone interested in history. We thank his daughter Sandra for preserving his memories and sharing them with us.



Elaine, Edward, Karen, Sandra & Diane Conradi

If you have the privilege of having any early family history to share, please call us so we may include it in a future issue.

1917 United States Enters World War

This year marks the centennial of the United States entry into World War I. The nations of Europe began fighting the war in 1914. When our country entered the conflict in April, 1917, we were allied with Britain, France and Russia against Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy. A look into the archives of the *New Bremen Sun* newspaper shows New Bremen's reaction to this historic event. (This article covers only the *Sun* issues from April through December 1917. The events of 1918 will be covered later.)

In 1917 German -Americans were the largest minority group in the country but the declaration of war caused a rise of anti-German sentiment. It also caused those who were not US citizens to seek citizenship. This was true for two local men as the *New Bremen Sun* reported in the April 13th issue that Ihle and Schultz want to become US citizens.

WANT PAPERS

Martin Ihle of New Bremen has made application with Clerk of Courts Lusk to file his second naturalization papers. Mr. Ihle is 53 years of age and was born in Edigheim, Pfalz, Bayern, Germany. He emigrated on Dec. 18, 1890...and he has never completed his naturalization as an American citizen...Mr. Ihle has renounced "absolutely and forever all allegiance to any foreign potentate and particularly William II, German Emperor." He is married and has two children. New Bremen has been his home for 17 years where he is a salesman for the Grand Union Tea Company, and is rated as a splendid citizen. He came here with his family from Pomeroy, Ohio, where they resided some years...

...Herman John Schultz has filed in Common Pleas court his second papers or petition for naturalization. He sets forth that he was born in Goelitz, Germany, in 1881, and that he came to this country in 1905, since which time he has been a resident of Washington Township, this county. He has married since arriving here and has two children, aged seven and two years. He renounces all allegiance to any foreign potentate and especially to William II, Emperor of Germany. (*New Bremen Sun* 4/13/1917)

Their case went before the common pleas court where the German alien residents were refused due to a regulation that did not allow citizenship to be granted to subjects of an enemy country. (*New Bremen Sun* 9/28/1917)

Support of the war effort was quick to appear especially in the arts. George Cohan wrote the patriotic songs "You're A Grand Old Flag" and "Over There". This song is best remembered for the chorus-*The Yanks Are Coming!* To encourage enlistment the famous poster "Uncle Sam-I Want You" was created. The *SUN* proudly reported the first New Bremen boy to enlist was William H. Rabe. He entered training in the Officers Reserve Corps in May at Ft. Benjamin Harrison



for three months. He was commissioned a First Lieutenant and moved to Camp Sherman.

To increase the armed forces the government passed a Federal Conscription Bill which made men liable for military service. According to the May 4th *SUN*, by Ohio law the County Auditor became the drafting officer. In Ohio and across the nation June 5 was Registration Day when all men aged 21 to 30 were obliged to register to comply with the draft. The *Sun* reported 163 men registered in New Bremen and German Township. The first draft lists for the registered men were published on July 27. The list contained the name, serial number and the all-important call number. Auglaize

County had an initial quota of 176 men. As the draft process proceeded, reports on the men accepted and those exempted were published in the *New Bremen Sun* under the banner "With the Colors".

In early October the first group of local men accepted, left for Camp Sherman near Chillicothe. They were given a farewell by the several hundred people gathered at Main and Monroe Streets. Before they left they were also given some advice about articles needed at Camp Sherman in this letter in the *SUN*.

Advice Given By Man With Personal Experience Gained On Ground

Writing to a friend at home, one of the boys at Camp Sherman, Chillicothe, who has spent a couple of weeks at the training camp, gives kindly advice to such who may be called to camp at a future day, suggesting a list of necessary articles the boys ought to bring along from home, as the authorities are somewhat handicapped at present when it comes to furnishing the boys with the needed supplies. He says:

Pack your outfit in a good sized suit case or traveling bag or you will be here like the Auglaize County bunch with no place to put a thing. Do not try to carry it in a bundle. Now I will not go into detail why I'm asking the fellows to bring the following articles as it will take too much time. Simply take my word for it, for I'm here and have been here long enough to know whereof I speak. It should suffice to know I want the fellows to be well prepared beforehand, and they will find use for the things after they get here. Now here it goes:

Razor, soap, brush, strap, sponge or wash rag, tooth brush, tooth paste, mirror, small comb, small scrub brush, tan shoe polish and brush, Ivory soap, two or three ordinary towels, and a big bath towel, at least two pairs of socks, two shirts preferably soft ones with collar attached, otherwise a few collars, two suits of long underwear, and for heaven's sake, not BVDs either, or you will freeze to death. Last night I slept with all my clothes on but my cap, coat and shoes and got up at 2:30 and put on my coat and shoes and got back in bed. And last, bring a good pair of heavy tan shoes along, a pair that can be worn until you are supplied with regular army shoes and above all don't come down here with English walking shoes on and expect to get through without having sore feet. Bring heavy shoes with good heavy soles or your feet will be in awful shape

in a few days. A good tan farm shoe would be a good investment for the fellows right now and wear them practically all the time until they get down here and they will be tickled to death they took my advice. Now I haven't mentioned a thing they won't need and hope they won't stop to ask why I should take such and such a thing. They will find out after they have been here a few days. (New Bremen Sun, 9/27/1917)

Camp Sherman near Chillicothe, Ohio was one of the Army Cantonments built to train soldiers after the United States entered the war. Each cantonment was designed to accommodate 40,000 men. Camp Sherman was the training site for Ohio and West Virginia. It was the third largest site in the nation covering 2,000 acres. During the war more than 124,000 soldiers passed through Camp Sherman.

US military forces began arriving in France in June, 1917 under the command of Major General John "Black Jack" Pershing. The remainder of 1917 was a relatively quiet time as they did not participate at the front but rather set up training areas for the new arrivals. Pershing wanted to establish an independent field army known as the American Expeditionary Force.

New Bremen man Otto Althoff had joined the army before the war and was stationed in France as a cook with the 16th Infantry. Letters to his family published in the *New Bremen Sun* reflect this early quiet time in France.

ALL RIGHT

SAYS PRIVATE OTTO C. ALTHOFF WITH AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCES IN FRANCE

Stars and Stripes Insure At Home And Also Abroad

Private Otto C. Althoff, with the American Expeditionary Forces in France since last summer, says in a letter to his parents, Mr. & Mrs. Christ Althoff, on Water Street, that he feels safe in France facing the Teuton enemy as he does on American soil as long as he is under the protection of the Stars and Stripes. Written on Y.M.C.A. stationery, postmarked by the Postal Army Service Nov. 9, the letter follows:

Dear Parents: I am well and happy and hope that you also are well. Have not heard from you since I wrote last but I try to write often just the same. We have been very busy here of late that I hardly knew what to do first. It has been raining here almost continually for the last couple of weeks that a person is kept busy trying to keep clean. I do the best that I can under the circumstances, although I would like to have things better. We cannot however change weather and make it to our liking.

Letter writing becomes very hard here, because a person has so much to say, and is allowed to say so little. I have tried to write letters with news in it such as you ask me, but they have not gone through. So you see it is useless for me to write them as it is only a waste of time.

I am glad to hear that the people back home take such an interest in me and the war. Still, it is a wonder to me that some people still think the way they do. You however should not let people scare you about the conditions us boys are in over here. They know nothing about us. The Government, Red Cross, Y.M.C.A. and Soldiers Club, are doing every possible thing they can for us, and we boys are grateful for what they do. For my part, I can live here just as well as back home, as long as I

am under the "Stars and Stripes." So, whatever you do, stop worrying. This will be all for this time, so goodbye.

Your son, Private Otto C. Althoff, Co. A, 28 Infantry, A.E.F. via New York. France. (New Bremen Sun, 12/7/1917)

So 1917 closed with New Bremen's drafted men in training at Camp Sherman including William Rabe who wrote this letter in December, 1917.

FINDS CITIZENSHIP OF THE UNITED STATES REAL SOURCE OF SATISFACTION

Camp Sherman Coming Fine and Boys All In Good Spirits

Lieut. W. H. Rabe of 323rd Machine Gun Battalion, Camp Sherman, Ohio, writing to the editor of the *SUN* under date of December 2, 1917, imparts encouraging and satisfactory information. He writes as follows:

I wish to extend to you my thanks and appreciation for the copies of the SUN which I received through your kindness. It is a real satisfaction on a Sunday afternoon to lounge on my bed and read the SUN. I can see from its columns that the people back home are back of us. This is as it should be. It is a real inspiration to a soldier to know that he will never be in need. This spirit of the folks back home will be even more necessary when we get into the trenches in France.

I am, as you will note, in the machine gun branch of the service, which, as you know, is a very important branch of the service and decidedly interesting. I like it better than the infantry, because it is of a technical nature and it naturally appeals to those of us with engineering and mathematical education. Many think it is the most dangerous of all branches; but there are no safe places in the army, and I am not looking for any such.

Our camp is coming along first rate. There are gloomy and muddy days, of course, but we make the best of them. Nearly all of us are in better health and spirits than we were in civilian life.

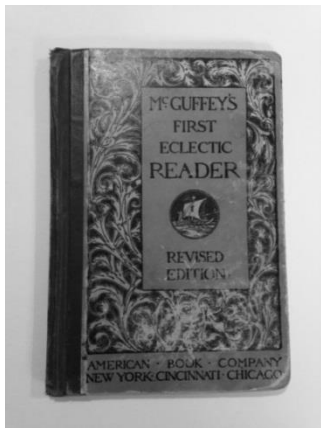
It is a real satisfaction to be privileged to be a citizen of a country which is at war against Germany and all that Germany has stood for in the last half century. It is even more so a durable satisfaction to be a soldier for such a country as the United States. I am sure that nearly every drafted man feels different now from the way he felt when he first left home. No red-blooded man can march in review to the swing of stirring march music with our own Stars and Stripes overhead without filling his chest to over-flowing with pure air and pledging himself personally to the defense of that flag.

A year ago the Germans said: "The Americans are too fat to fight." If, however, they saw us now, here at Camp Sherman, they would realize what stupid guessers they are.

With best wishes to all, I am

Very Cordially, W. H. Rabe, 1st Lieut., M. G. Bn.

(New Bremen Sun 12/7/1917)



SCHOOL ROOM NEWS!

Now on display at the Luelleman House Museum is an excellent example of New Bremen's education history. A First McGuffey Reader owned by Howard Huenke was donated by Donald & Margaret Seyfried.

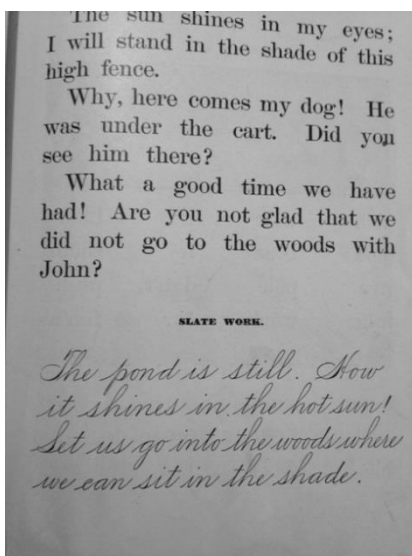
Howard Huenke was educated in the New Bremen Schools and graduated with the class of 1909. During the time Howard was in elementary school at the old Central School on Franklin Street, McGuffey readers were the premier reading textbooks. The First Reader taught the student the beginning skills of reading using phonics, spelling and

writing (**slate work**) while the next books in the series built on those skills.

McGuffey Readers were edited by William Holmes McGuffey an American educator. He became a teacher at age 14 in a one room school on the Ohio frontier in 1814. Few textbooks existed and students bought their own books. McGuffey

saw first-hand the need for reading texts. By 1826 he was a professor of languages at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. It was during his time in Oxford that his friend Harriet Beecher Stowe recommended him for the job of creating a series of graded readers. McGuffey Readers became the most used reading texts in American schools for about 100 years. A great supporter of the readers was Henry Ford who cited the readers as one of the most important influences of his childhood.

McGuffey Readers were in use in our school for decades. During their many years of use the series was revised several times. We are privileged to add this book to our collection of McGuffey Readers used by New Bremen students. The following list shows our donated readers. It is interesting to note that many were signed since the students owned their own books. This collection is an important part of New Bremen's educational system history.



LIST OF DONATED READERS

First Eclectic Reader, Revised Edition, 1896 American Book Co. **Orin Greiwe**

First Eclectic Reader, Revised Edition, 1896 American Book Co. **Howard Huenke**

New Second Eclectic Reader, 1857 Van Antwerp & Bragg Co.

Second Eclectic Reader, Revised Edition, 1879 Van Antwerp & Bragg Co.

New Third Reader, American Book Co. **Alvina Heidt**

Third Eclectic Reader, Revised Edition, 1879 Van Antwerp & Bragg Co. **William Watermann**

New Fourth Eclectic Reader, 1857 Van Antwerp & Bragg Co. **Emma Bertke**

Eclectic Fourth Reader, Revised Edition, 1879 American Book Co. **William Watermann**

Eclectic Fourth Reader, Revised Edition, 1879 American Book Co.

Eclectic Fourth Reader, Revised Edition, 1879 American Book Co. **Ella Bertke**

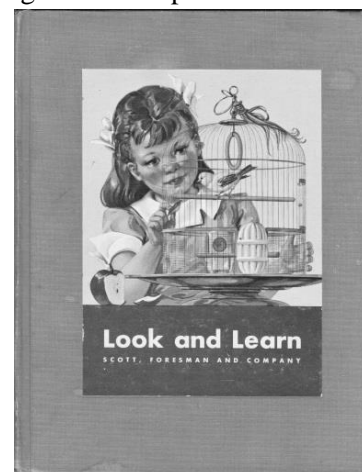
New Fourth Eclectic Reader, 1885 Van Antwerp & Bragg Co. **Lizzie Watermann**

New Fourth Reader, 1901 American Book Co. **Leona Poppe**

Eclectic Spelling Book, Revised Edition, 1907 American Book Co. **Arnold Warner**

McGuffey Readers taught students to "sound out" words using the phonics method. Then the preferred method of teaching reading became the "look and say" or sight word method. That was the method used in the reading series published by Scott Foresman which came to replace the McGuffey Readers.

Students in school from the 1930's to the 1960's probably remember reading stories with the characters Dick, Jane and Sally and don't forget Spot, Puff and Tim. The next decade saw a resurgence of the phonics method and then it shifted to a whole language program using trade books instead of a reading series. Methods to teach reading change often but McGuffey Readers were the premier series.



NEW BREMEN HISTORY WALK

The Third Graders visited the Luelleman House and the Pape House on Friday May 12th during their New Bremen History Walk.



The children enjoyed writing their names on the blackboard in the schoolroom at the museum.

NBHS Class Ring Collection



From Left: 1927, 1935, 1940 and 1961

We are preparing a display of NBHS class rings that have been donated to the Historic Association. The rings are symbols of Cardinal Pride and will preserve a part of our school history.

Class rings bring back memories of by-gone days and are a tradition that remains through the years. High school class rings became popular in the early 1900's. These early rings usually had only a symbol of the school attached to the center of the ring. Later stones and other decorations were added to some rings.

The first rings were all uniform chosen by class vote. In recent years students have been able to personalize their rings. In the 1950s and 1960s the practice of exchanging high school rings with a beau became prevalent. Times and traditions change but class rings are still a token of the achievement of graduation.

Pictured are some of the rings in our display. If you would like to donate a NBHS class ring to enhance our collection please contact a board member.



The boys are seated on a concrete bench made by the New Bremen Cement Products Co., a company that specialized in concrete blocks and drainage tiles. In the 1930s-1940s the company also made benches, urns and birdbaths.

The Good Roads Problem

When Ohio became a state the only roads in this area were trails used by people on foot or horseback. These roads were narrow, just wide enough for single file travel. Later some of them became military or farm-to-market roads and were widened to handle wagon teams pulling heavier loads. Narrow dirt roads would have been in use when New Bremen was founded and became wider as the town grew.



Muddy South Washington Street in 1897

The roads met the needs of travelers but the journey was a rough experience. The road surface became worse as traffic increased and rain or snow turned the dirt to mud.

Improvement was attempted when some dirt roads became plank roads by adding timber which was abundant in the area. This method was used on the road between New Bremen and Chickasaw as it was known as Plank Road.

Other attempts at improving roads dealt with dragging, scraping and adding layers of gravel to the surface. Gravel was another material that was easy to obtain in this area and so was cost effective. But all these

methods of improvement were labor intensive because they were done without power equipment.

**Horse-drawn Drag Scraper
donated to our museum by Johann
& Mary Klein**

As the Good Roads Movement gathered strength in the last part of the 19th century, a host of patent applications were received for machines that, using horses, helped maintain the surfaces of the nation's highways.



Pictures of Gravel Pit and pump courtesy of Don Kettler

Another problem was the lack of leadership in improving and maintaining the roads. As other methods of transportation, the canal and railroad came into use, conditions of the roads continued to decline. The need for better roads became apparent as bicycles and cars became favored modes of transportation.

The lobby for road improvement was called the *good roads movement*. It was successful in 1916 when Congress passed the Good Roads Act that gave money only to states with "responsible highway departments." New Bremen had several citizens who were interested in and worked to promote the good roads movement. One was Clifford V. Huenke and another was Dr. William J. Stappe.

Clifford V. Huenke (1882-1934)

Clifford V. Huenke was born September 1, 1882 in New Bremen, the son of Louis and Emma (Wulfeck) Huenke. He was best known for his success as a creamery-man.

He graduated from NBHS with the class of 1901 and enrolled that year in a commercial course at Miami-Jacobs College in Dayton. The next year he attended the college of agriculture at Ohio State University and later completed a course in dairying at Iowa State College in Ames, Iowa. Upon his return to New Bremen he associated himself in business with his father who had established the first creamery in northwestern Ohio. With Clifford's education and expertise, the White Mountain

Creamery and the White Mountain Farms grew and flourished.

Mr. C. V. Huenke also had other interests. In 1918 he was elected mayor of New Bremen and served six terms. He was president of the Auglaize Furniture Company, the First National Bank of New Bremen and of the Argonne Hotel company in Lima.

Mr. Huenke's marriage to Martha Dierker took place in New Bremen in 1908. He had two younger siblings – Gertrude Huenke Komminsk and Howard Huenke. Clifford died in 1934 at the age of 52 years.

Dr. William J. Stappe (1883-1930)

Dr. Stappe, the son of Henry and Mary Luebkmann Stappe, was born at Delphos, Ohio. He graduated from Ohio Northern University in Ada as a pharmacist. He later took up the study of veterinary medicine and upon completion of the course he set up a practice in New Bremen. He was a resident in New Bremen for 24 years.

Actively interested in civic affairs, he quickly assumed a place of leadership and could always be relied upon to support every worthwhile public undertaking. He was a member of the New Bremen Business and Professional Men's Association and was known as one of the outstanding Good Roads men in this section and served as a director of the Auglaize County Automobile Club. In 1913, he acquired the local agency for the sale of Chevrolet automobiles which covered ten townships in Auglaize, Mercer and Shelby counties. Through his initiative New Bremen instituted an annual Chautauqua program that continued until 1928.

Dr. Stappe and his wife, Wanda Miller Stappe, had a daughter Vilma who graduated from NBHS with the class of 1927. Dr. Stappe had his veterinary office at 109 E. Front Street and his residence next door at 113 E. Front Street. In failing health for more than a year, he became critically ill in early May of 1930 and died three weeks later at the age of 46 years.

New Bremen Road in State System

Perhaps a little belated, but, nevertheless, a real Christmas gift for New Bremen came in the form of an official announcement Saturday by the state highway department that 24 miles of the New Bremen-Huntsville road has been included in the 400 miles of county roads drafted into the state highway system by Director Robert N. Wald and his advisory committee. Starting at New Bremen, the road extends straight east through Kettlersville and Jackson Center to the Dayton-Lakeview road, south of Indian Lake.

Agitation to have the road made a part of the state highway system was started years ago with C. V.

Huenke, vice-president of the White Mountain Creamery company, taking the lead in the movement. W. J. Stappe, chairman of the roads committee named by the New Bremen Business and Professional Men's Association, also was an active worker in support of the project, as were other good roads men in the three counties through which the road passes – Auglaize, Shelby and Logan...
(The New Bremen Sun, 1/2/1930)

Highway Officials Assign Numbers To Roads Approved For State System

Heads of the traffic bureau of the state department of highways this week started assigning route numbers to the county roads recently added to the state system. In all cases, as far as practical, numbers assigned will be those of connecting highways so as to afford "through" routes, or the continuation of established highways.

Two roads included in the 400 miles of highways taken over by the state are expected to have a far-reaching effect in the future development of this section of the state. These are the New Bremen-Huntsville road, extending 24 miles east from New Bremen through Kettlersville and Jackson Center and tying up with the Dayton-Lakeview road, south of Indian Lake; and a small stretch of road starting south of Newport and joining with Route 48, just north of Covington...

(New Bremen Sun 1/16/1930)

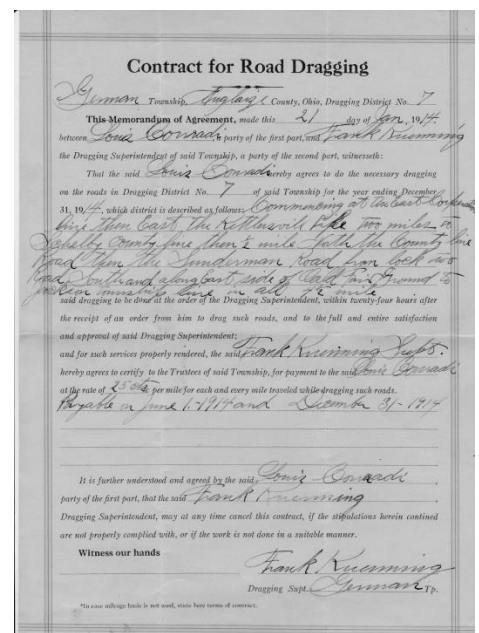
Highways in New Bremen

State Route 66, a north-south highway was commissioned in 1923 and follows the Miami & Erie Canal. It runs from US 36 in Piqua to US 20 in Fayette, Ohio, a distance of 118.6 miles.

State Route 274 is an east-west highway, commissioned in 1930 and extended at both ends in 1937 to run from SR 273 in Rushcreek Township to US 127 in Marion Township, a distance of 52.70 miles.

1914 German Township contract for road dragging:

Drag 4 1/2 miles of township roads for one year as needed at the rate of 25 cents per mile. This was accomplished with the use of a horse.



WHAT IS IT? WHERE IS IT?

How well do you know New Bremen? Many items of New Bremen's history are on display, not in our museums, but in plain sight around town. In this feature we will picture items and test our readers' knowledge of *what it is and where it is* in New Bremen.

1.



2.



3.



(Answers on p. 16)

HISTORY MYSTERY



1. We need your help with this picture. We think we know the man on the right, but who are the others?

2. Two NBHS graduates at Ohio Northern University circa 1928.

Who are they?



3. Who is this third generation New Bremen mail carrier? For the answer see the article on page 15.



New Bremen Postal Service

Written by Walter Behm

The following article concerning the New Bremen Postal Service goes back in the memory of the writer to about the year 1915. The post office was located at that time in an old frame two-story building on South Washington Street near Monroe Street. There were living quarters upstairs, a millinery store on the north side ground floor and the post office was on the south side. August Gobrecht was the postmaster, and two or three of his daughters clerked during the afternoon rush hour, when the *Evening Leader* arrived. The lobby was usually filled at that time with folks waiting for their newspaper. Each patron rented a pigeon hole for his mail, but he had to be served by the clerks since there were no lock boxes at that time. All mail was handed to the patron by the postal clerks, Postmaster Gobrecht resigned and accepted a position as rural mail carrier on Rural Route One and Lafe Kunning became postmaster about 1918.



The Post Office was in the Grothaus building on the right.

The post office was moved to the Grothaus Building at the corner of West Monroe and South Main Street. Shortly thereafter Congress passed a bill establishing village mail carrier service to small qualifying post offices. New Bremen qualified, but Postmaster Kunning did not apply for the service. He felt he would be denying the elderly people of their one big event each afternoon of going to the post office for their *Evening Leader*.

After Lafe Kunning's term expired, R. W. Kuck became postmaster. One of his first actions was to apply for carrier service in New Bremen. Before applying for the carrier service, Mr. Kuck contacted Frank Buckloh who had worked for him in his implement business and Walter Behm, this writer, with whom he was well acquainted. Mr. Kuck had called on me quite often when he was in need of a substitute, either on one of the rural routes or dumping mail bags during catalog arrival or some other need.

Frank and I both accepted. The Post Office Department granted village mail delivery effective July 1, 1923. Mr. Buckloh undertook the task of delivering the mail for the entire village. Mr. Kuck was disappointed in the Department's action but gave Mr. Buckloh the task of carrying out the Post Office Department's orders. Starting on July 1, 1923, Frank attempted to serve all the New Bremen patrons. With the help of all employees available in the Post Office for the tasks of sorting, casing, strapping out bundles for delivery, Frank worked from 6:30 in the morning until after dark with a flashlight for the first four days. This included July 4th, which was supposed to

be a holiday, but he never got any mail delivered on the west side of town.

On July 4th a grand homecoming celebration was planned for President Warren G. Harding in his hometown of Marion, Ohio. Mr. Kuck invited my father, J. W. Behm, to go with him to Marion to see the Post Master General about allowing only one carrier to serve the entire town of New Bremen.

During the parade, Mr. Kuck spotted the Postmaster General in his big black limousine, which was moving slowly down the street. Mr. Kuck dashed out into the street, leaned over the back seat of the Postmaster General's car and said, "I am R. W. Kuck, Postmaster at New Bremen, Ohio. You granted me village carrier service in New Bremen, but with only one carrier. Either you grant me another carrier or take off the one you did allow." The Postmaster General said, "Alright, Mr. Kuck. Starting tomorrow, July 5th, put on another carrier. Have a telegram on my desk tomorrow and I'll sign the necessary forms making the appointment official."

On July 5, 1923, my appointment became official and during the next 46 years I served as carrier, Assistant to the Postmaster during the war while Mr. O. C. Ruedebusch was in the service, then back again to carrier until the death of Postmaster Herman Laut. Then I again became Assistant to the Postmaster until my retirement after 46 years and four months of service.

The requirement to be a rural carrier in the early years was to own a carriage and two horses. The starting salary was \$9,000 per year.

I cannot begin to remember all the persons who were employed at the Post Office during my time, but I'll name the postmasters. R. W. Kuck, Cade Schulenberg, Herman (Bud) Laut and Orville C. Ruedebusch. Regular rural carriers were J. Wilson Behm, A. M. Steinebrey, Otto Schneider (a substitute) and Lester Blanke.

In conclusion, our post office went from a third class to second class and then to first class during my years of service.

Three Generations of Mail Carriers

Walter W. Behm (1904-1991) was the middle child of seven born to J. Wilson & Ida Koester Behm. His father **J. Wilson Behm** was a schoolteacher for 19 years and then became a rural mail carrier for New Bremen. His grandfather **Frederick Behm**, born in Germany, came to America in 1850 at the age of six years. After serving in the Civil War, he was captain of a canal boat on the Miami & Erie Canal. Later he was awarded the contract to bring the mail from Botkins to New Bremen and made the first application for establishment of a rural route in the district served by New Bremen Post Office.



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

New Bremen, Ohio 45869-0073



NBHA Museum – 120 N. Main St.



PLEASE KEEP US ADVISED OF ANY ADDRESS CHANGES.

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

NON-PROFIT ORG.

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New Bremen, OH 45869

Address Service Requested

UPCOMING EVENTS

The Luelleman House & the Pape House will be open from 1-4 PM on the 4th Sunday of July, August, September & October.

If you wish to visit at other times, call any Board Member for an appointment. We always have lots of interesting things for you to see, so please plan to visit.

New Bremen Fire Department Picnic

July 22, 2017

BREMENFEST in New Bremen,

August 18-20, 2017

New Bremen PUMPKINFEST,

September 23-24, 2017

DO YOU HAVE A HIGH SCHOOL REUNION PLANNED THIS YEAR? IF SO, PLEASE SHARE A PICTURE WITH US FOR THE TOWPATH.

Send your photo by email to gen@nktelco.net

or by mail to NBHA, P. O. Box 73,

New Bremen, OH 45869-0073

WHAT IS IT? WHERE IS IT? ANSWERS

1. The cornerstone of the Auglaize Furniture Factory building at the corner of W. Plum & S. Herman Streets. Now a Crown building.
2. A sundial memorial to Frank & Caroline Streine, founders of the New Bremen Parent-Teachers Association, presented to the school in 1973 by Harold & Carol (Streine) Opperman. Located on front lawn of Elementary/Jr. High on Walnut Street.
3. The US Survey geodetic brass marker used as the beginning point for surveying the original plat of the town of New Bremen. The marker indicates that New Bremen is 941 feet above sea level and that there is a \$250.00 fine for disturbing the marker. Located at corner of Main and First Street near steps of the old Zion Church building.

HISTORY MYSTERY ANSWERS

1. We need your help with this picture. Please call or write or email your information.
2. Lloyd Blanke and Leander Landwehr
3. Walter Behm