

## 28. Life in Early New Vienna

Now let's look at some photos showing how things were in New Vienna while my grandparents, my aunts and uncles, my parents, and my brothers and sisters and I lived there. These pictures bring back so many memories, Little Dear One! They take me right back into my childhood!



The picture on the left is an architect's drawing of the Schemmel Mill in 1860. In 1845 Henry Schemmel started construction of a flour and woolen mill east of the present town on a farm now occupied by Randy Lansing, using the waterpower of the North Fork of the Maquoketa to run the mills. The picture on the right is the Vorwald Mill, which was a water-powered flour mill, again using dammed-up water from the Maquoketa to run the mill wheels. My grandparents probably took their wheat and oats and sheep wool to these mills. Maybe one of the men by the door is a relative of ours!

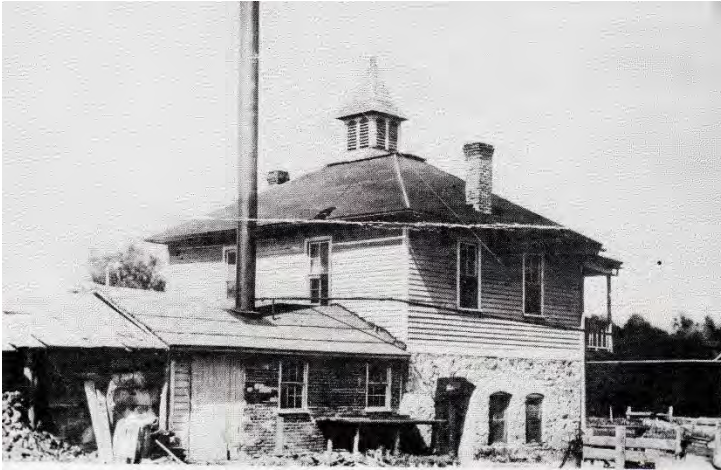


The Washington House, one of the oldest buildings in New Vienna, was built by Jacob Ramm in 1854 and operated as a hotel, saloon, and livery stable. It was purchased by Sigmond Schaeztle in 1860.



On November 4, 1898, the original Washington House was destroyed by a fire believed to have started in Schaeztle's horse barn and which soon engulfed what was considered the best business block in town (destruction visible in left photo.) The Rev. Father Pape rang the church bells to alert the townspeople, and everyone prayed that the wind would abate and change directions because this wind was blowing from the east and threatened the entire town. The Schaeztle brothers rebuilt the Washington House in its original form, but out of constructed brick, and it is still standing

today. It became known as Schaetzle's Tavern. I was 8 years old when the old building burned. The second-floor hotel later became the living quarters for the Henry Schaetzle family.



The New Vienna Creamery began operations during the Civil War in the basement of this house. Frank Naber was the first buttermaker and lived upstairs. The second creamery building was built in 1913 and operated until 1972. In the early days, buttermakers often moved from one creamery to another to advance their careers, so it was common practice for creameries to provide a home for the buttermaker.



The first New Vienna Brewery was established and built by Andres Baemle in 1865. In 1874 additional buildings were added, and from 1874-1880 the brewery was owned and operated by Baemle and Peter Ferring. Operators from that time on were the following: 1880-1882 Peter Ferring, 1882-1884 Ferring and Mescher, 1884-1890 Peter Ferring, 1890-1907 New Vienna Brewing Company. Barley and hops were used for brewing and the residue was fed to cattle at the Brewery. Beer was

delivered to neighboring towns by Henry Nesler. On April 23, 1931, the *Dyersville Commercial* ran the following article about the New Vienna Brewery.

**New Vienna Brewery Built in 1874 Now a Landmark - Once One of the Greatest Industries in the County Baumle & Ferring were the Original Owners – A Bit of History**

One of the oldest landmarks in eastern Iowa is the old brewery situated on the banks of the Maquoketa, on the outskirts of the most picturesque town in the middle west, New Vienna. Erected in 1874, on the site of the original brewery, built even many more years before, this giant stone structure has stood for nearly sixty years as a reminder of what was one time the biggest industry in the county.



Today the building stands alone, a dreary, haunted-looking structure like a giant castle of old that has seen happy and prosperous days and probably will never see them again. For with the advent of the national prohibition law in 1918, the breweries were closed, perhaps forever.

Inscribed in the stone on the fore part of the building facing what once was the road leading into New Vienna from the south, are the words "Baumle & Ferring. 1874". These two men constructed the massive stone addition to what was already a large brewery. For a time, the brewery flourished but later it passed into the hands of Frank Buenker who turned it into a huge grist mill. A giant windmill, thirty-four feet in diameter was purchased at Batavia, Illinois, and was mounted on the side of the brewery. Then whenever wind conditions were favorable, grinding operations were in progress. Very frequently it happened that it would be impossible to work during the day owing to the lack of sufficient wind velocity and the workmen at the mill would be forced to take advantage of any wind that chanced to come during the evening and following the old maxim of "Make hay while the sun shines: these men would "grind while the wind blew".

The New Vienna Brewing company was organized in 1903 and once more the manufacture of beer was carried on. A large number of workmen were always employed in the brewery and beer was sold to all points within several hundred miles. The fame of the "Old German Lager" beer is still remembered by many of the old timers who we can safely say would walk many a mile today to be able to once more taste of its sweetness.

A trip into the old brewery today is most interesting. One is surprised at the immenseness and sturdy construction of all that goes to make up the structure. The walls are of heavy stone, hauled for many miles to go into the make-up of the building. In an exceptionally gloomy and ghost-like cellar are located giant beer vats fully twenty feet high where the beer was formerly stored. Leading far away under the ground are narrow passageways that resemble the mental pictures most of us have of the Catacombs. These passageways lead into other cellars further away wherein are more giant vats of a different type which were one time used to cool the beer after it had been brewed. A trip up the heavy plank stairway from the cellar to the first floor reveals remnants of strange pieces of machinery at one time used in the manufacture of beer, and in the early days of the institution, in the makeup of whiskey. In one room is a sort of platform built above the remainder of the floor with a guard rail along the edge. Below on the floor is a large corroded iron kettle wherein many years ago a workman, Joe Sturm, by name, slipped and fell from the platform above into the boiling beer and was scalded so badly that he died.

Continuing a tour of exploration of the building leads one into the old brewery office where today, nearly thirty years later, are found heaps of old papers and memorandums dating back to 1903, and showing much of the correspondence, bookkeeping and methods of business employed by the New Vienna Brewery company. ... A handbook containing the names of the customers was found that listed very nearly every saloon in this section. Dyersville had twelve saloons at the time, all doing a thriving business. A circular letter was found inviting proprietors of various saloons in eastern Iowa to try the famous "Old German Lager" beer which was manufactured at the brewery. Trial sample cases were sent to many places to introduce the product. Several old Brewers' Journals were found lying about containing pictures of many of the great "Beer Barons" of the time.

The happy days when beer could be purchased for a nickel a glass have some time passed. Maybe they will come again. Maybe not. But the sight of the old brewery must cause many a wondering look among the young folks while to the older residents it recalls many a good time spent with the aid of “Old German Lager” turned out by the historic stone brewery.



This photo shows the old Kerper's Store before automobiles. Note the hitching posts for the horses along the side street. Information from *Roots and Wings*: “Almost everyone who grew up in the New Vienna area remembers Kerper's Store. It was a landmark in the community that served generations of local families in a variety of ways. The business began in 1862 by George Meinhart. He fought in the Civil War in the beginning and became ill and was sent home. He must have been a wealthy man because besides owning the store he owned most of the block and also the icehouse and

was instrumental in bringing H. Huberty to New Vienna to make soda pop down where Mary Kruse's barn used to be. He was also involved in the Postal Department. There are records that go back as far as 1855 from the Postal Department that were stored in the attic of the store.”



George Meinhart, founder of the store later known as Kerper's Store, brought H. Huberty to New Vienna to start a soda pop business. Here the Huberty children are pictured with the family business product.

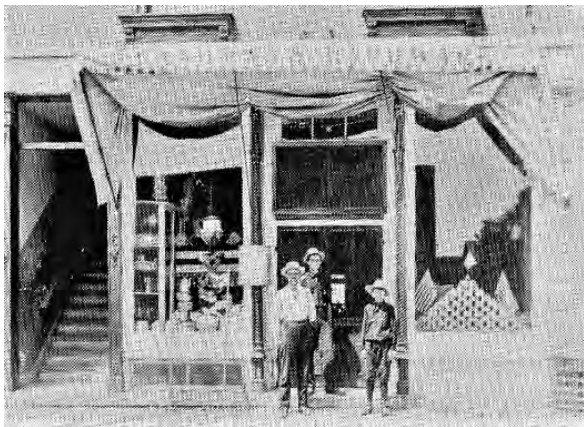
This photo showing the Huberty children with bottles of soda pop was obviously used to advertise and market the Huberty soda pop business, but it is interesting for us because Heinrich's children would have known the Huberty children. They probably did not go to school together, because Heinrich's children would have gone to the country school St. Mary's just a quarter mile from their house, while the Huberty

children probably went to the town school. But they would have seen each other at church. The

children's clothes are interesting: leather boots, black stockings, short pants for the boys, and all the children wearing hats.

“Jacob Kerper began working for George in the early 1860s and also for A.C. Walker who had a store in Farley. Jacob, as the story has it, lived at the present Leon Kluesner farm which was the Kerper homestead, and he peddled with a team of horses between Farley and New Vienna for Walker and Meinhart. Jacob attended Epworth College in the early 1860s and also taught school two years from 1864-1866. In 1870 George was becoming more ill and he sold the store to Jacob. George passed away from consumption in May of 1879. In the old store journals after 1879, records show Mrs. George (Mary Winter) Meinhart as a customer. The widow, Mary Winter Meinhart, married Hubert Huberty in 1882. Jacob took a partner, John Kuhl, from about 1878-1880 with 1/3 Kuhl and 2/3 Kerper. Many of the journals were probably lost in the 1898 fire when the Washington House and most of the block north of the store burned.”

Jacob Kerper was an important part of life in New Vienna: he owned the first creamery, he began the garage business, he had a bank, he was president of the parish council for 20 years, he was a big supporter of the Railroad, he was on the Brewery board, was a Northwestern Mutual Insurance agent. He was a director and later President of the German State Bank in Dyersville, he was the Postmaster in 1870, he was the school treasurer and later the secretary, he was instrumental in the development of the New Vienna water system and the building of the Catholic Church, he served as Mayor for 8 years and he was on the city council for 4 years. An interesting notice in the *Dyersville Commercial* July 29, 1892 reads: “Sunday night burglars entered the store of J. Kerper. Their booty was not much, Mr. Kerper being too shrewd a businessman to leave any money in the drawer. They changed their old suit of clothes for a new one and left.”



This is an early picture of Fangman's Hardware Store. From *Roots and Wings*: “A man with many hats is the best way to describe J.H. Vonderheide. He was known as a carpenter, saloon operator, and undertaker, plus he ran a retail business selling furniture and hardware. In 1880, in a small town, he probably did whatever was needed in New Vienna. He was the first businessperson known to own a hardware store in New Vienna.” I remember my father and older brothers buying nails and tin pails and ropes from this store.



ALPH GERKEN, BEN VONDERHEIDE, A.R. MESCHER, GEORGE HEYING

This is the Mescher Brothers Variety Store, my favorite store because of all the unusual things you could find inside it. Henry and Anton Mescher purchased this building in 1904.

One of the most exciting times of the winter was ice cutting. Let's look at some memories of that from Julien Schaetzle whose family owned the Schaetzle's Tavern. "Ice making was the biggest project of the year that Dad, Misch and Louie looked forward to. Ice-making started weeks before the actual ICE MAKING DAY. It usually took place just west of the bridge in the town of New Vienna. In late fall, a rock dam would have

to be built across the stream for two reasons: so the water would be deep enough to freeze to a minimum of 12-14 inches, and so the water would be above the sewer that Dad and Uncle Joe built from the Washington House to the creek. The sewer emptied into the river about 25 feet west of the bridge."

"Ice-making usually took place in January or February, depending on the weather. The snow continuously had to be shoveled off the ice for weeks before ice-making, so the ice would get thick enough. The snow would act as an insulator, and not allow the ice to thicken. The ice-cutters, plows, picks, scrapers, tongs, saws, etc. would have to be removed from the shed and sharpened days before the "D Day" excitement would begin. All of the equipment would have to be hauled to the ice-making area. Also, an adequate supply of sawdust would have to be available near the icehouse. This was hauled from the Bolsinger sawmill northwest of Luxemburg, about a mile north of the highway at the entrance of a timber that ran for miles. The icehouse was about four stories high, and all the pulleys and ladders to the top had to be checked. The work force had to be lined up – the bobsleds or wagons and teams of horses from the farmers, in all about 20-25 people would be working for two Days once the ice-making started. My mother and sisters were in charge of getting lunches several times a day.

**Cutting Ice: L-R Barney Wentze, Herman Neuhaus, Joe Schaetzle, George Recker, Al Pape, Ben Neuhaus, Tony Mescher, Barney Neuhaus, Ferdinand Freking, unknown, John Mescher, Louie Pape, Hank Neuhaus, Frank Wilhelm, , Leo Oberbroeckling, Albert Ploessel, Al.... In front Frank Freking, Andy Ploessel, Leo Kramer, Herman Schwerts.**



The family was up very early in the morning on “D Day”, and the day started with a big breakfast. Dad and my brothers had everything well-organized as to who worked the creek and who worked in the icehouse. Dad had the cutting plans all laid out, and this was quite a job in itself. The ice cutters had to be pulled by a horse, and the ice cut in sections, and a channel had to be cut so the cut ice blocks could be floated to the loading sleds or wagons. After the horse-drawn ice-cutter went through, there was still a lot of cutting to be done by hand. I cannot say how deep the cutter cut the ice, but I assume it was 6 to 8 inches, then the men with approximately 4-5 foot ice saws would cut the ice into blocks 18 inches wide and about 24-20 inches long. Then men with long poles with a sharp pick on the end would push the ice into the channel to the loading area, where men with tongs would load the sleds with ice blocks to head for the icehouse. At the icehouse, the men had the floor covered with sawdust in a 25 foot by 25-foot square. After the sawdust was covered with the first layer of ice, a layer of sawdust was added and another layer of ice started, and so on until the icehouse was filled to near the top. After the first wagons or sleds arrived, there were enough sleds that the men were kept busy continuously unloading the ice. There was a pulley on top of the icehouse, and after the first several layers of ice were in place, tongs attached to a rope would be used to grip the chunks of ice, and a horse would pull the rope to lift the ice so that the icehouse could be filled to the top. The main icehouse had 8-inch joists, and the 8-inch space between the outside walls and the ice was filled with sawdust from the top (4 stories) to the bottom. The sawdust served as a perfect insulator to keep the ice from melting around the perimeter of the icehouse.”

After the icehouse was filled with blocks of ice, the blocks would be taken out of the icehouse as needed, hosed down, hauled to the Washington House by milk cart or wheelbarrow, and loaded into the ice box, which was about four feet wide and ten feet long and about 4-5 feet high.



“Adjacent to the ice box was a walk-in cooler, where the beer, pop, candy, etc., were stored. Above the ice box was a pulley with a rope and ice tongs attached, and each chunk of ice had to be pulled about four feet high into an opening in the ice box. Inside the ice box, either Misch or Louie was bent over, putting the chunks in place as Dad lifted them into the opening to the box. I would say it took 15 or 20 chunks of ice to fill the ice box. During the months of May through August, this was a weekly chore. During the remaining weeks, the ice box would be filled about every two weeks.”

Saloons were an integral part of town life, serving as a gathering place for farmers to catch up on



the news, make business deals or trades, find work or find help to hire, and simply relax with a stein of that wonderful Old German Lager.

For those in the professions, like traveling judges, attorneys, doctors, and clergymen, a strong matched team with a sturdy buggy like the one in the photo on the right was a must, especially in the cold winter months. For other purposes a single horse might do the work of pulling a buggy to church or town or visiting, but a matched team might also be used, as Mr. and Mrs. Clement Boeckenstedt are using in the photo on the left.



This wonderful old photo below is the Bear Grove Creamery, established in 1888, where Johnnie's family took their milk.

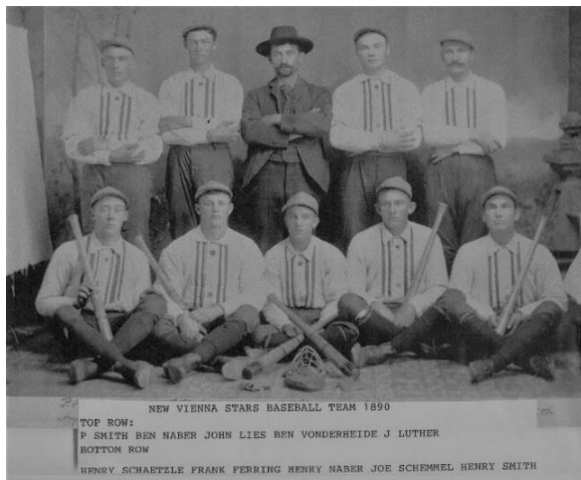




Neighborhood baseball teams played their games in pastures.



Neighborhood baseball teams played their games in pastures in the early days. Below left is the New Vienna Stars Baseball Team in 1890. None of my brothers were old enough to join the team yet. The photo below right shows the new brick buildings constructed by Joe and Henry Schaeztle after the Washington House was destroyed by fire in 1898. You can also see the early downtown boardwalks.



Germans loved to celebrate, things like anniversaries, birthdays, housewarmings, barn-raising, baptisms, homecomings, etc., and in the early days they were held at someone's home, with cornstarch sprinkled on the floor to make it slick for dancing the Virginia Reel, the Square Dance, the waltz, polka and fox trot. This was often how young people met and began their courtships. But nothing merited a bigger celebration than a wedding. In the New Vienna Historical Society Book *Roots and Wings* there is recorded a story of the wedding on February 12, 1896, of Clement Bockenstedt and Clara Vorwald. This gushing and absolutely charming turn-of-the-century report is a must-read, I think.

A young couple with every reason to be happy as the day is long. A whole day of mirth and happiness celebrating the wedding. All the neighbors there. A continuous meal from ten in the morning until ten at night. Rich presents to the happy couple. People of all nationalities have their peculiar ways of extracting the sweet from their life, but none of them nearer in getting it all than the Germans, who have the happy faculty of throwing all cares aside for the day and giving themselves up to the demands of the occasion. This is found wherever two or more Germans congregate together, for you will always find good cheer and good fellowship in the midst of them. Upon all occasions where it is appropriate, the Germans make it mirthful, and never more than when two young people are launched on the sea of matrimony. It is never the fault of the friends if the honeymoon does not dawn upon them rich in the golden rays of modified merriments, and is made an event which should in after years, impress them with the peculiar interest taken in what has been to them most all there is in life. The German wedding is more than an event, it is an episode and so arranged that the happiness is not all with the blushing bride or the stalwart groom, but its rays enter all lives in the immediate surroundings. To illustrate what we mean, we can do no better than give an account of a wedding that took place in new Vienna the 12<sup>th</sup> of this month the high contracting parties being Mr. Clement Bockenstedt and Miss Clara Vorwald, the children of wealthy and prosperous farmers living in the vicinity of that center. These young people are both well known in the community and, due to their personal merit, are very popular. The match so called was highly gratifying to the parents of both sides, and the event was deemed worthy of the best that could be done.

The first thing done was to send out invitations and they went to sixty-five families, and included all the families, from oldest to the youngest. The day before the wedding twelve cooks were engaged in preparing the feast for the wedding party, for not only was quality the factor, but quantity was an absolute necessity. The wedding was celebrated at the church of St Boniface at 8:30 in the morning, the good Father Pape officiating and the edifice filled with the friends of the happy couple. Immediately after the ceremony the whole crowd repaired to the house of the groom's father, it being a more extensive structure than that occupied by the parents of the bride and there the merriment began. The feast was run on the principle of the continuous shows now so common on theatrical boards. As many went to the table as could be accommodated, and another crowd followed them, until all had been fed, when the first lot were ready to be fed again, and so it went from 10:00 in the morning until 10:00 at night, with no intercession for the weary cooks, who were kept busy all the time. During the time an orchestra was kept at work, and old and young enjoyed themselves in the dizzy mazes of the waltz to their hearts content, while brawny young men with their aprons hung over their Sunday clothes moved among the crowd with salves carrying the amber nectar so necessary to every well-regulated German assembly. It was a sure case of unconfined joy. There was no difference in age, the gray-haired matron entering into the occasion with a greater fervor, if anything, than the maiden who knew little how long it would be before they would celebrate her debut on the matrimonial stage. Perhaps the happiest people in the house were the parents of the children just united. They were not only proud of their children but of the fact that through their own thrift and energy they were able to give the young people a start in life that would place them under guardianship of a kinder fate than they had known. The father of the groom had made his son a present of 160 acres of land and some stock. The father of the bride had



given her all the furniture necessary for the new house and a check for \$1000. It will be noticed that the young couple had a motive for the hilarious, and their friends reveled in pleasure over their good luck. As stated before, the celebration ended at 10:00 in the evening, but the next day, those that were cooks the day before came and were guests of honor, their entertainment being the closing chapter of the happy wedding time. The event both shows that the customs are retained and still enjoyed to the limit, but that the farmers in and around New Vienna have been prosperous and have been winners in their struggles against the many privations they were obliged to bear when they first settled on the prairie farms that are now so valuable.



Wedding receptions were held at the home of the bride or groom.



Buggies are parked at a farm where a wedding is being celebrated.

This wonderful 1905 photo shows how all the horses and buggies lined up one after the other as relatives and friends attended weddings at the home of the bride or groom. The occasion in the

second photo was the wedding of Henry Wessels and Antonetta Tegele on June 7, 1905. The first photo was the occasion of a double wedding, a common occurrence then. In my family there were four double weddings.

Here are some wedding memories of Anthony Abeln as recorded by John W. Schwendinger: “Weddings were a big event. Two weeks before the wedding a man would come around on horseback to invite everyone, while reciting a long poem. The invited guests gave him a ribbon for his hat. On the day of the wedding the bridal party would come galloping into town in a three-seated wagon, and the blacksmith would fire a cannon of Civil War vintage. The blacksmith fired the cannon at all special celebrations and church events. A pound of powder was used for each shot. One day he used too much powder, and the cannon burst, killing the blacksmith. After that they used two anvils for the blasts. Black powder was placed in a recess on an anvil, and another anvil was laid on top – a newspaper fuse was lighted and the resulting explosion shook the earth.”

In the early 1900s as automobiles became available but were still a luxury, it was popular for young couples to be transported to their marriages in a chauffeur-driven car. This photo is one of the



oldest pictures of a car in the New Vienna area and shows a chauffeur driving a Ford Model T. The photo below is the wedding on June 14, 1910, of Frank Goedken and Ida Domeyer, neighbors of the Crubels in Petersburg. We have already seen the photo of Johnnie and me on our wedding day in November of that year.



