

## **SPORTS and RECREATION**

From the earliest days of New Baden, the sports which created the greatest interest were baseball and bowling. New Baden had many ball clubs through the years, the names of a few here-in mentioned: New Baden Victors of 1910, Machine Runners Team, Shufflers Ball Team, and the New Baden Ball Team of 1916. At the present time the New Baden Baseball Club plays a regular schedule and is in the Greater St. Clair County League. The team is managed by William Beine, Jr. About 1948 a Booster Club was formed to raise funds for the ball club and to further baseball in the community. This club included Alfred Brown, George Rathmann, the American Legion and the baseball team.

A girls' softball team was organized in 1954. In 1955 they joined the Girls' Twilight League and are playing a regular season schedule. The team is managed by James Swinney. There were many men's softball teams, among those: Holy Name, Players Guild, Drugstore Cowboys, and the WPA team.

At one time the Woerner Bowling Alleys, once located in the rear of Kiefer's tavern, were famous for their bowling matches and New Baden had many excellent bowlers. Bowling alleys were also located in the building which now houses Welling's store. There are no bowling alleys in New Baden at the present. However, there are locally sponsored teams in other towns.

In the early days very little ready-made entertainment was available. Church affairs, local picnics, and family gatherings provided the major entertainment. One lady recalled that it was a Sunday ritual when she was young for the girls to go down to the depot to watch the passenger train arrive at the station.

New Baden was actively interested in music, for many bands and orchestras were in existence from time to time. The earliest orchestra that can be recalled was the Griesbaum Orchestra begun in 1894, and continued for about 25 years. Members of the group were the Griesbaum's—Emil, Xavier, Louis, Phillip, Henry and the Hummel brothers, Julius and Grover. Mr. Julius Hummel also recalled the Star Band of New Baden with Xavier Griesbaum as the first leader. Mr. Hummel then became the leader and also instructed new members. The band gave concerts in the City Park; the band stand was behind the old City Hall. Members of the Star Band included Leader Julius Hummel, Xavier Griesbaum, Henry Griesbaum, Oscar Mallrich, John Koch, Adolph Reuter, Louis Bassler, Lawrence Kaltenbronn, Herman Hemann, Henry Kuhn, Fred Beine, Emil Strotheide, John Strotheide, Cecil Duffner, and William Lehrter.

The old Nagele Hall was the most popular spot in New Baden. Roller skating was enjoyed there during the week and dancing on the weekends. The Hummel Orchestra played for many of the dances. Movies were occasionally shown here, also. Many activities were held at Hummel Park including dancing, picnics, and outings. Heinzmann Park, behind the old Andrew Mueller house, was also a picnic and outing area.

In later years popular dance orchestras in New Baden and surrounding towns were Tom Fortune and his Silver Moon Orchestra, Oscar Mallrich Orchestra, and William Lehrter Orchestra. At present there are three orchestras in New Baden who play for dancing. They are Jack Peters Orchestra, Bob Goebel Orchestra and Richard Rakers Orchestra. The first two may be called modern dance orchestras and the latter plays "old-time" music. They are members of Local 175 of the American Federation of Musicians.

At present the annual fund-raising picnics of the various organizations are held in the City Park. These include the Chamber of Commerce Homecoming, Firemen's Picnic and American Legion Picnic. The annual school picnic is held at Rathmann's Park, where family outings, dances, and picnics are held. Dances are also held at the new Legion Home.

The town has had two movie theatres; one no longer stands and the other is not operating.

Before the music program was brought to the school, there was a community band (in the 1930's) which played concerts and marched in parades. This band was discontinued.

The schools of the community have presented plays and operettas throughout the years and there have also been home talent shows for the amusement of the townspeople from time to time.

The old-timers can relate some types of recreation, quite nostalgically, which we are seldom privileged to enjoy in these days. What could compare, even today, with a buggy ride in the moonlight, a sleigh ride on a cold winter night (“in the old days they REALLY had snow”), a husking bee, or a taffy pull? Perhaps the generation of today will recall 1955 as “the good ole days” of television and jet planes.

New Baden Centennial Book, 1855-1955, pages 28-29.