

CHAMBER of COMMERCE

The Chamber of Commerce was organized in 1904 as the Commercial Club. First records are not available, so the first officers cannot be listed. The date of organization of the club was verified by Herman Fochtman, the only living charter member.

For many years the club's interest was in repairing and securing streets and roads. They sponsored street repairs in the town, oiling of the county line road and the building of a levee on the road to the Kalmer School. The first town picnics were called "Good Roads Picnics" and were begun in 1915. Later they were called Homecomings and are still sponsored annually by the Chamber of Commerce.

The club has been instrumental in bringing the following industries to New Baden: Plastic Doll & Toy Co. in 1946, to which it gave financial aid and promoted the sale of shares; Ace Metal Products, Inc. in 1946, to which it gave 9 acres of land for the factory site and invested in its stock; and sold to the Roth Dairy Co. of Mt. Vernon in 1947, the old creamery building.

The club keeps up the City Park playground and purchased the permanent playground equipment. In 1954, they put permanent lighting in the City Park.

Up to the year 1949 the club sponsored the Boy Scouts. At the present time the Chamber sponsors the School Boy Safety Patrol financially, having purchased rain coats for the boys and two portable, blinking caution signals for the street crossings.

In 1947 the village financed the drilling of a new well for the village. In 1949 they also financed repairs to the city well. In 1952 they financed the insulation on the standpipe of the water tower.

In 1950, at I.C.C. hearings, the club fought the impending removal of passenger train service. When this failed, they aided the routing of the Highway Post Office through the town. In this year they also negotiated the contract with Illinois Power Co. to install the "white way" lighting system along Hanover Street.

Since 1945 a Capital Highway committee from the club has been lobbying for the approval of the highway. The state approved its construction in 1946, but material shortages and politics delayed its beginning until 1955.

In November 1951, the club moved that Herman Fochtman and William Stoeckel be honored as charter members of the club. At the annual banquet the following January these men were presented with plaques for their many years of service.

In 1953 the club granted a 99-year lease on property owned, to establish a community park. The 1954 Homecoming was a community project and one-half the proceeds went to the Community Park Board.

The club voted to allow Chamber of Commerce lands to be annexed into the village limits in 1954. During this year they also dug a trench for a new city dump on a portion of their property north of the Ace Metal plant. They purchased a tractor and attachments for maintenance of streets and secured a public telephone booth in the City Park after installation of the dial system.

The Chamber of Commerce has, throughout the years, assisted the various organizations, industries, and civic projects through loans and direct gifts.

Annual events with the club sponsors are the Christmas Lighting Contest, Clean-up Week, and the yearly banquet.

The club is sponsoring the Centennial Celebration in conjunction with the annual Homecoming Celebration, and one-half the net proceeds will be used for repair and rebuilding of sidewalks.

Present officers of the Chamber of Commerce are Charles Cook, president; J. V. Mueller, vice-president, and Robert Thoeming, secretary-treasurer. The membership is 51.