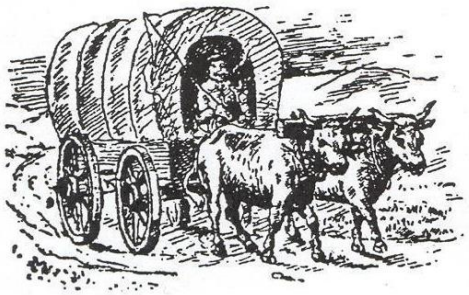
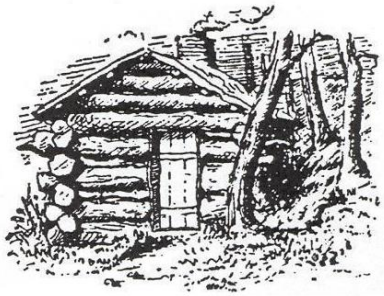


JUNIOR PIONEERS
OF NEW ULM AND VICINITY



Vol. 37 / No. 1 JUNIOR PIONEER NEWSLETTER Winter 2023

# Junior Pioneers Winter Social
# FRIDAY, February 17, 2023

**New Ulm Country Club**
**5:30 pm Social Hour**
**6:00 pm Dinner**
**Program to Follow**

## Featured Speaker: Terry Sveine

Terry will be talking about his dad's favorite brother, Burton "Buddy" Sveine. In the 1940s and '50s, Buddy worked for and owned the New Ulm Bus Line and Liberty Cab. These services provided New Ulm with great public transportation opportunities, but were not without risk, danger, and satisfaction.

He lived a full life and was known as a "fun loving" man who raised a family of five children.

Terry gives an insider's view of Buddy the man, but draws insights and observations vital to New Ulm's history that his uncle helped develop. We believe that you will enjoy learning about an interesting man, an important part of 20th century New Ulm history, and enjoy Terry's entertaining yet informative style.

***Reservations Due by Tuesday, February 14***
***RSVP to Rebecca Fliszar at 507-404-0427 with number attending.***
***Payment to be made at the door the evening of the event.***

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## Early Recreation and Parks in New Ulm, Minnesota

*The following is an edited excerpt from the presentation "A History of the Park and Recreation System in New Ulm, Minnesota - Part One, 1848-1927" by Terry Sveine and Tom Schmitz.*

**Physical Fitness in the Later 1800s**

As New Ulm grew from 635 persons in 1860 to 5,403 citizens in 1900, the need to exercise and compete developed organically, that is, by itself with no grand directive leading it. This took the form of various private clubs dedicated to differing aspects of exercise and competition.

Foremost among the clubs were gun clubs. In addition to sharing a common interest in guns, they were primarily focused on target practice. Much of this was done at Hunters Rest (the future Jr. Pioneer Park)

at the south end of town near Schell's Brewery. We still have some targets from that time period showing who came closest to the targets, sometimes they were spun to add a degree of interest.

Hunting clubs were slightly different than gun clubs and emphasized group hunting excursions. There still exists of the clubs displaying the results of their group hunts with racks of birds and other animals.

Bowling had its many adherents, too. This sport has ancient beginnings and was popular when the first Europeans came to America. It was popular in the German lands as far back as 300A.D. and that may have contributed to its popularity in New Ulm, coming with the earliest settlers. It could be played outside on smoothed grass or sand surfaces, but portable wooden lanes came into being by the late 1870s. These would be installed for special celebrations, civic events, and as seasonal entertainment. For example, Anton Henle installed a bowling alley at his New Ulm House inn in rural Milford in 1878 for 4th of July celebrations, Hunter's Rest (today's Jr. Pioneer Park) had a bowling alley for a June 1884 celebration, a 4th of July event featured bowling on "St. Jacob's Hill" (above the hospital on modern 5th North and Highland) in 1884, and bowling was featured in a celebration at the new Hermann park in 1889 in sight of the future monument's foundations. Turner Hall had seasonal lanes outside in their park by 1878 and they continued that practice for many years. *(New Ulm Weekly Review, May 1, 1878, July 3, 1878, June 11, 1884, July 2, 1884, August 7, 1889; Arnold J. Koelpin, Hermann: from Legend to Symbol, (New Ulm, MN, Master Graphics, 2001), p10-20.)*

There is early evidence of an inside bowling lane owned by brewer Anton Friton in 1879. *(New Ulm Weekly Review, December 10, 1879)*

The American Bowling Congress was born in 1895 and that led to standardization and the ability to play equally matched tournaments with neighboring towns. Bowling was an early and long established sport in New Ulm that continues to provide recreation for New Ulmites to this day.
*(The International Bowling Hall of Fame and Museum's web-site: https://www.bowlingmuseum.com/Visit/Education/History-of-Bowling)*

Baseball teams grew as the sport spread around the country and New Ulm sported its share of teams. The first baseball game in Brown County happened between the Iberia Shooflys and the Golden Gate Gophers on July 15, 1871. Baseball came to New Ulm soon after with the Germania Base Ball Club from New Ulm playing Sleepy Eye's Wide Awake Base Ball Club in July 1873. Rural and smaller towns saw frequent games, but it took until the 1890s for organized teams to appear in New Ulm. *(Brown County Historical Society's Exhibit, "Batter Up! Baseball in Brown County". https://www.browncountyhistorymn.org/exhibits/digital-exhibits/#1602355049305- b2d2265a-d282*)

Business sponsorships or entire company teams were also a common sight on the ballfield. Such as Schell's Brewery. Baseball teams in larger towns and cities tended to be more varied. Teams formed out of a common interest, such as the New Ulm married men were common), or profession. In 1914, New Ulm organized the Twilight League, composed of six New Ulm teams: the Barbers, Eagles, Professionals, Builders, Post Office, and Collegians. The teams played their games on weekday evenings.

Bicycling was all the rage in America in the late 1800s and it came to New Ulm soon after. Ads abound in local papers extolling the virtues of bicycling and their availability at various merchants. With roads still in their crude infancy, and no paved roadways on which to ride, there was a danger involved in bicycle riding. The New Ulm Cycle Club was in existence in 1895 and regular races at the Brown County Fair were one of the club's highlights. *(Daniel John Hoisington, "Meet Us at the Fair: A History of the Brown County Fair," (Roseville, MN, Edinborough Press, 2017), p 24-29.)*

For a town located on two rivers, it should be no surprise that ice skating grew naturally with New Ulm. Ice skating took place on the Minnesota and Cottonwood Rivers as they froze in winter, although this author's father spoke of skating on the slough lands below the bluff line along modern Garden Street from his home at 1010 North Payne to Hauenstein's Brewery in the 1930s. (Subsequent tiling and development has drained this perennially wet area from New Ulm's landscape.) While individuals may have created ice ponds in their own backyards, no formalized skating ponds were operated by the City in early New Ulm.

Gymnastics was practiced virtually from the beginning of the town's founding inside Turner Hall and in their park. While most of the earliest gymnasts were men, women had their place, too. Referring to the new Turner Hall built in 1901, historian Dan Hoisington writes in his history of New Ulm, "The gymnastics program, under the tutelage of Hermann Hein, was one of the finest public programs in the United States with its athletes frequently winning national competitions. After school gymnastics classes were held free of charge for anyone in the community who wished to attend." Frequent tournaments and regional competitions were held in New Ulm at Turner Hall, including 1910's Regional Turnfest. Turner gymnasts participated in free exhibitions and their presence in the many parades held throughout the year was a normal part of New Ulm's civic calendar. Many New Ulm youth participated in gymnastics courtesy of the Turners. *(Daniel J. Hoisington, A German Town: A History of New Ulm, Minnesota, (Roseville, MN, Edinborough Press, 2004), p116.)*

With no electronic amusements (i.e. radio. TV and computers) in homes at the times, picnicing and camping were commonly practiced. Ad hoc groups took it on themselves to meet for a meal and day of recreation and relaxation along the two rivers, on private farm land, and at special group-owned "camps" outside the city. While not organized by any entity, many of New Ulm's citizens partook of this simple form of recreation. These forms of public interaction had many advantages that stressed the concept of community and society over today's stress on individuality.

**Private Parks Arise to Handle Needs**

One unique phenomenon to New Ulm was the rise of many private parks to accommodate various needs. Most of the parks were of the "affinity group" sort, that is, they catered to groups with a certain "affinity" or like-minded-ness.

Turner Hall Park has been looked at in some detail, but it should always be remembered that it was the private property of the Turner organization. Many public gatherings were held there, but the majority of the gatherings were part of a Turner-led event. (However, this author remembers playing Frisbee and tag in the trees and baseball –with a chain-link fence behind the catcher– in the northwest corner of the park in the 1960s.)

Hermann Heights Park grew up around the Hermann Monument on top of the Center Street hill in the 1880s. It had benches and picnic tables, along with enclosed gazebos and rudimentary toilets. The stunning views of New Ulm and the river valley made an ideal spot for picnics and family gatherings. Owned by the Sons of Hermann Lodge with land purchased from the Oswald family, in 1929 it was turned over to the City of New Ulm, where it was developed even further.

With the rise of the automobile in the early 1900s, many towns were courting the resultant caravan business by traveling auto groups. "Tourist car parks" to accommodate these visitors was proposed at both Turner Hall and at Hermann Heights. Neither came to fruition.

Cecelian or Catholic Park was primarily the land located along 6th North and Washington Street. It was behind the Holy Trinity Church (later, the Cathedral) and on the site of today's Cathedral High School. It had basic landscaping with border-defining shrubbery and a bandstand for musical performances and

speech-giving. A refreshment stand was nearby. It was in effect, a private Catholic picnic and gathering site, although ads sometimes said "all are welcome."

Newspaper accounts show it being around from 1898 to at least 1922, if not longer. (An end date is not currently known.) It often held fall Harvest Festivals, 4th of July events, and commemoration of the U.S.-Dakota War speeches were given in 1899. The St. John's and St. Anne's Court and the Christian Mothers were sometimes the sponsors of various events and they also held conventions on the site. In 1922 it was said that the 40-member New Ulm Tennis Club held matches on the "Catholic Park's court." A 1921 4th of July event featured bowling, ice cream, lunch, and the Hofmeister Band, while a 1901 event had these same entertainments plus a tug of war and a greased pig contest. It was fun for all! (*New Ulm Review, various newspaper accounts, 1888 to 1922)*

Hunter's Rest has been mentioned in relation to gun clubs, but it was a private park enabled by a group of 14 private investors and hunters who bought land at the extreme southern edge of New Ulm in the 1870s to be used for shooting and their families' picnics. In 1923 it was purchased by the recently-formed (1912) Junior Pioneer Club to hold their outings and gatherings. The "J.P.s" are descendants of the pioneers and are dedicated to "keeping green the memory of our ancestors." (*https://jrpioneers.com/history/)*

K.C. Park was begun in 1924 when a group of Catholic Church members of the Knights of Columbus group bought land from Joseph and Anne Buehl about four miles west of New Ulm "picturesquely hemmed in on the right bank of the Minnesota River by heavily wooded bluffs." Soon after being bought, summer cottages, outhouses and gardens, summer kitchens, a dock, and sand beach for river use were added. It made for a great weekend get-away and summer vacation spot without having to drive "up north." It was available to K.C.s and their friends, and could be rented by others. Mention of it was gone by 1975, but the road northwest of New Ulm is still called the K.C. Road. (*George L. Glotzbach, "A Short History of K.C. Park, Brown County, MN," (New Ulm, MN, Brown County Historical Society, 2014.) Submitted for the BCHS's Kitty Lieb Essay Contest.)*

The Brown County Fairgrounds is the area of eight-square blocks bordered by 12th and 16th North and State and Franklin Streets. Owned by the Brown County Agriculture Society, and tired of the frequent fair locations they had to utilize, they bought the land we know as "the fairgrounds" in 1896. It was used as a fairgrounds, as a place for the stock breeders to meet and exhibit, and as a horse racing track. Over time various other civic entities have rented the fairgrounds for their own use, including auto racing, festivals, and circuses. (This author remembers circuses in the late 1960s and helping to set-up tents and other tasks, for minimal pay, but maximum excitement!) *(Daniel John Hoisington, "Meet Us at the Fair: A History of the Brown County Fair," (Roseville, MN, Edinborough Press, 2017), p 25-29.)*

Schell's Deer Park and Gardens have been an integral part of New Ulm's landscape since August and Theresa Schell opened them to the public in the late 1800s. Developed over time, they include a deer park (August Schell was a forester in Durbach, Germany and hence to nod to deer), a fish pond, and sculpted flower gardens. Many a New Ulm family spent an afternoon freely strolling the grounds at the brewery.

**The Parks in 1915**

A story in the October 13, 1915 edition of the New Ulm Review, entitled, "The New Ulm Parks," features just three parks. Included in the list are two private parks: Hermann Heights and Turner Hall Park, along with the publicly-owned German Park. The story is quite revealing for what it says–and for what it omits. (*Hermann Heights was turned over to the City in 1929 from the Sons of Hermann Lodge. CJ Carmichael Braun, "Marking Time: An Illustrated Guide to Brown County's Sites of Historical Interest," (New Ulm, Brown County Historical Society, 2006), p56.)*

First of all, for a story with such a broad topic, many of the smaller parks are omitted, which must speak to their relative obscurity. Nothing is made of the many "Market parks" and North and South parks also receive no mention. Their incognito status speaks to a lack of park development and New Ulm's more compact size at that time (ca. 6,000 people) meant that neighborhoods had not fully developed and spread out yet. Also neglected were mention of the (eventually named) Washington and Lincoln Parks on State and 7th North and 7th South streets respectively. Today these two named-for-presidents parks are block-square parks fully developed with wading pools and a variety of playground equipment. They pull from a large area and are well-used in today's park program.

Hermann Heights is noted for hosting a variety of events ranging from Sons of Hermann national conventions to "personal celebrations where only two congenial spirits partake of a communion with nature." The sweeping city-wide views from the lark are also lauded.

Turner Hall park is called a "semi-public place" that specialized in commemorative events related to civic history and patriotic celebrations. The south half of the Turner block is noted for the lovely trees of many species and the lack of formality in their planting is said to give an "air of being natural." An open space behind [west of] the actual Turner Hall is left open with space for gymnastic and other competitions.

Clearly the glory of the town's park system is said to be German Park. Highlights of the park are said to be the double row of pine trees leading from 1st North and German Streets to the park's center, planted about 1880 by horticulturalist, brewer, and civic enthusiast, Joseph Schmucker. The central bandstand, finished just a year earlier (1914), and the tree-shaded slope from German Street formed a natural amphitheater that allowed for regular Sunday night concerts by the Second Regimental Band and later by the Municipal Band. A decorative fountain provided additional atmospheric grace. Flower beds, neatly maintained gravel borders, benches, and drinking fountains appealed to the adults, while a sand box and swings gave the young ones a place to play. Given its location just a block from the business, many midday lunches are done in the park and evening or weekend picnics were a regular occurrence by the citizenry. The absence of "Keep Off the Grass" signs spoke to the welcoming nature of the park.

The ruins of August Friton's brewery remained near the southeast corner of 1st North and German Street as a picturesque novelty. A city water reservoir bordered the park limits and the old public school along German Street between 1st and 2nd North was said to provide memories for many of the New Ulm adults who matriculated there. It was used by the Johnson Company to make overalls and employed about 40 operators at the time. *(*Daniel J. Hoisington, A German Town: A History of New Ulm, Minnesota, (Roseville, MN, Edinborough Press, 2004), p101.)

The story claimed, "this park is well kept up by the city" and it was a simple truth. German Park was, and still is, the showpiece of the city park system, even if it is considerably smaller than originally platted!

**1927 - The Beginning of a New Era**

Aside from the aforementioned civic parks such as Hermann Heights, Turner Park, and German Park, the other platted city parks were considered as "eyesores" and were generally undeveloped.

Writing of the near-abandonment of our parkland, the Brown County Journal wrote, "The splendid tracts set aside for parks and playgrounds grew up in brush and weeds." It was said that South Market Park (eventually Lincoln Park) was basically a gravel dump. *(Brown County (MN) Journal, March 18, 1932)*

Things were about to change in a hurry when active, civic-minded hotelier, Fred Johnson, went on a visit to Madison, Wisconsin in 1927. He was so impressed with that city's park system that he inquired about it and was told that it was all the work of volunteers. Inspired to emulate that back home, Johnson began organizing citizens into his vision of restoring the city plat to its original intention – that of landscaped parks with regular maintenance.

That same year (1927) he formed the New Ulm Park Association and with encouragement from the city council began recruiting civic-minded volunteers to join him. Seeing that this grand vision would take money to support, not only were the new association members to supply their labor, they had to pay dues! In a short time, he had hundreds of members. This must have spoken to the general agreement that parks and recreation were of paramount importance to a fulfilling civic life in New Ulm. Two years later he was said to have had a "groundswell of support" and a board of directors of 25 people. *(Minneapolis Journal, June 30, 1929)*

The group worked to restore and improve the four smaller Market Parks, North and South Parks, and North and South Market Parks (later Washington and Lincoln Parks.) Graveled walkways through the parks, tree plantings, shrubbery and other decorative plantings, signage, formal archways, some water features and ponds, and flower plantings made former "eyesores" into attractive parks everyone could be proud of. Johnson entered the magazine Better Homes and Gardens' contest for a "More Beautiful America" in the early 1930s and won an "honorable mention" with a wish to personally visit New Ulm from the editor!

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**Do you have a topic that may be of interest to Junior Pioneer members?**
Consider writing an article for a future edition of the newsletter!
Please keep articles to 2-4 pages and photos are welcome.

Please send questions or submissions to Jyneal McCrea at jynealmccrea@gmail.com

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***Deceased Members**

***New Members**

| ***Name*** | ***Ancestor*** |
|---|---|
| James R. Ellison | Runck |
| Emily E. Ellison | Runck |

*** Memorials & Donations**

Jim & Karen Kretsch - *Memorial in honor of Ohmar Schugel*
Dr. C.S. & R.B. Hintz - *Memorial in honor of J.P. Heymann*
Thomas Kienlen - *General Donation*

*If we have forgotten or miscredited anyone concerning Memorials &Donations, Deceased Members or New Members, please notify Rebecca Fliszar (Secretary) at 507-404-0427 or fliszarfamily@gmail.com or any Board Member and we will correct it.*

**Have you paid your dues?**
**2023 Annual Membership fees were due October, 2022**

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

| | |
|---|---|
| Single Membership | $25 _____ |
| Joint Dues (*Husband & Wife both qualify for membership*) | $35 _____ |
| Surviving Spouse | $25 _____ |

*Send checks to: Junior Pioneers, PO Box 22, New Ulm, MN 56073*
*Questions? Rebecca Fliszar at 507-404-0427 or fliszarfamily@gmail.com*

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***Please consider receiving future newsletters via email.***
This would save the organization considerable funds in printing and mailing costs.
Please forward your email address to Lynn Henle at l.henle@comcast.net

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## SAVE THESE DATES
## Summer Picnic – Tuesday, June 13th
## Annual Meeting – Friday, October 20th

| 2023 Junior Pioneer Board Members | |
|---|---|
| Mark Furth, President | Jeff Gulden, Vice President |
| Rebecca Fliszar, Secretary | Mary Ellen Schanus, Treasurer |
| George Downs | Darla Gebhard |
| Lynn Henle | Daniel Juni |
| Jyneal McCrea | Gordon Palmer |
| Ruth McCrea Simpson | Judy Zahn |

**Junior Pioneers**
**P.O. Box 22**
**New Ulm, MN 56073**
(Address Service Requested)