

New Baden Chamber of Commerce

1904 – 1935 – 1987

The information contained herein is a condensed summary of the activities of the New Baden Chamber of Commerce from 1935 to the present time. It would be difficult to list in detail all the accomplishments, activities, and especially the many generous financial donations the Chamber has made to the community. The members of the Chamber of Commerce can be proud of their accomplishments over the years.

The Chamber of Commerce was organized in 1904 as the New Baden Commercial Club. First records are not available. The date of organization was verified in 1955, as the time of the Centennial, by Herman Fochtman who at the time was the only living charter member. For many years, the Club's main interest was in the repair and securing of streets and roads. The first town picnic's sponsored by the Commercial Club were called "Good Roads Picnics" and begun in 1915. Later they were called "Homecomings" and later called the "June Jamboree". The Chamber still sponsors this event.

The Commercial Club was reorganized March 11, 1935 and the name changed to the New Baden Chamber of Commerce. Elmer Zimmermann was elected as temporary chairman. The constitution and by-laws as revised by the committee consisting of O.W. Billhartz, Elmer Zimmermann and J.W. Bann, Sr. with minor alterations were approved on a motion by Dr. E.C. Asbury and second by John Vrabel. Elected officers for the ensuing year were Elmer Zimmermann President, Tony Gildig Vice President, H.J. Hemann Secretary Treasurer. Directors were Herman Fochtman, William Hemann, John Vrabel, Eugene Peters, and Dr. E.C. Asbury. Those attending the meeting were H.B. Hempen, Tony Gildig, Eugene Peters, Dr. E.C. Asbury, George Hertenstein, Herman Fochtman, Frank Faltus, John Vrabel, William Hemann, Frank Zirkel, O.W. Billhartz, Edwin Paul, Elmer Winkler, Emil Strotheide, Elmer Zimmermann and H. J. Hemann. At this time only, Edwin Paul is the only living member of this group.

For many years, the Chamber continued to work on road improvements. Meetings were held with Albers, Germantown and Bartelso in an attempt to secure a paved route connecting the communities. The Chamber was also involved with the communities north, Trenton and Highland, in an attempt to secure a paved highway which is now known as State Route 160.

In 1935, Dr. J.W. Hardy recommended that the Chamber sponsor a Boy Scout Troop. At their regular meeting on October 14, 1935, the Chamber approved the sponsorship. Dr. J.W. Hardy was selected as Scout Master and Robert Watson, Jr. as his assistant. In later years, Robert Watson became Scout Master. The Chamber continued to support and maintain an active interest in scouting for many years. The Scout Troop in New Baden is still active and growing.

In 1939, the Chamber purchased 17 acres of land from the Coal Company (**located in the vicinity of 7442 State Route 160). In 1953, this land was leased to the Village of New Baden for the establishment of a Community Park. In 1965, the land was sold to the Village for one dollar. Through the years, the Chamber has continued to maintain an active interest in the park. The Chamber has sponsored many projects and donated a great amount of their time and funds in the development of the park. Because of their generosity and foresight, we have one of the most beautiful parks in the area.

In 1946, the Chamber erected a factory building which was originally constructed to house a pottery plant, which did not materialize. The building was eventually sold to Ace Metal Products, a manufacturer of electrical boxes. In 1967, the building was sold to Wilburt Vault which is still in operation at this time. ** Wilburt Vault remained in operation until 2005. This property is located at 7551 State Route 160; currently houses a variety of businesses.

In 1952, Herman Fochtman and William Stoeckel were honored with a membership plaque. At this time, they were the only living 1904 charter members.

During the next several years, the Chamber continued to financially assist the Village and other organizations in the community. The Chamber loaned \$2,000 to the American Legion (105 E Illinois St) for the construction of a home and an additional \$2,000 for air conditioning; loaned the Village of New Baden \$8,500 for the remodeling of the Village Hall; donated the Village \$3,000 and a loan of another \$3,000 for a well water supply; purchased \$2,500 in bonds that were sold by the American Legion for a bowling alley; loaned \$1,700 to the Village for the installation of an air condition unit in the Post Office (formally located at 100 E Hanover St, where the EMS Building is currently located). Throughout the years, the Chamber has purchased and maintained the Christmas decorations that adorn the business district during the holiday season.

In 1955, the Chamber of Commerce sponsored the Centennial celebration. Through this club, committees met and plans were made and carried out. The Centennial was a gala affair. It brought the community together. We have many beautiful memories of the Centennial. It was an effort of which we can all be proud of.

In March of 1964, plans were underway for the construction of a medical building. Bonds were printed and put on sale locally on May 8, 1964. The cost of the medical building was \$40,000. The land for the building was purchased from the Village for the sum of \$3,500. In April 1966, Dr. Paul Biedenbarn, Mason City, Illinois, started practice in the Center, which he continued until 1985. In 1986, the Medical Center was sold to Dr. Linda Uhrig, MD and Dr. William Koentz, DDS. The Center has been expanded along with some extensive remodeling. **This building is now owned by Dr. Koentz and is located at 9 North 1st St.

The Chamber has always realized the importance of having a good library in the community. In 1959, the Chamber sponsored the first library in the Francis Hotel (200 E Hanover St). The library operated a few years and it was not until 1978 that they again assisted in the opening of another library. The Chamber paid \$125 rental fee per month for housing the library. This continued until 1985. The library is now located in the O.W. Billhartz complex (210 N 1st St) and is supported by property tax. We now have one of the finest libraries in the area.

In 1983, the Chamber held their first business fair "Opportunity Plus" in the gym of the O.W. Billhartz Civic Center (100 E Birch St). The affair was a success with about 40 booths displaying various products available from local merchants along with displays by local churches and civic groups.

In 1983, sponsored by the Chamber, New Baden joined seven other communities: Belleville, Fairview Heights, Lebanon, Mascoutah, O'Fallon, Caseyville, and Shiloh, as part of the Southwestern Illinois Development Corridor. The purpose of the Corridor is to market areas along I-64 for business and manufacturing. Each community contributes for advertising in business publications, area development magazines, printing of brochures, and direct contact with potential customers. The Chamber has paid all costs for this program. Mayors of the eight communities serve on the Board of Directors. Members are Ralph Bann Mayor and appointed alternates, Chamber of Commerce, James Baehr and Gene Ripperda. The Chamber has always maintained an active interest in obtaining new business and industry.

Throughout the years, the Chamber has played an important role in the development and well being of this community. We are celebrating our 50th anniversary as a result in the change of name only. The fact that the Chamber has been in existence 83 consecutive years is commendable and indicates that we have been actively promoting the goals of this organization.

PAST PRESIDENTS – CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

1935 – 1986

1935	Elmer Zimmermann	1961	Wilber Fochtman
1936	Tony Gildig	1962	Ben Harpstrite
1937	Edward Hemann	1963	Eldon Ahner
1938	Ben Holtgrave	1964	Nowlen Cook
1939	Otto Tiechman	1965	Ted Medcalf
1940	J.R. Hertenstein	1966	Jim Sweeney
1941	Charles Harpstrite, Jr.	1967	Larry Cervanka
1942	Henry Sendt	1968	Henry Schwartz
1943	William Hemann	1969	Henry Schwartz
1944	Bert Baird	1970	Jack Holt
1945	O.W. Billhartz	1971	Walter Toennies
1946	Fred Billhartz	1972	Truman Weaver
1947	Walter Harpstrite	1973	John Hund
1948	George Rathmann	1974	Wheeler Little
1949	Stanford Fritz	1975	Denis Kuhn
1950	Ralph Bann	1976	George Lyons
1951	Robert Cromlich	1977	George Lyons
1952	Robert Hemann	1978	Richard Muston
1953	Oscar Poos	1979	Charles Weatherholt
1954	Alfred Brown	1980	Art Davis
1955	Charles Cook	1981	Art Davis
1956	Robert Roth	1982	Ken Von Bokel
1957	Walter Harpstrite	1983	Stan Ripperda
1958	A.A. Krausz	1984	Jim Davis
1959	J.V. "Buddy" Mueller	1985	Carson Hempen
1960	Ralph Bann	1986	John Mullin

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
MEMBERSHIP LIST – 1986

Eldon Ahner	Cliff & Laura Hattan	Terry Neubauer
James Baehr	Bill Hemann	Carol Osborne
Ralph Bann	Ben Hempen	Robert Oster
Steve Bann	Carson Hempen	Mike Pokojski
Mike & Cindy Berkemann	Tim Hoerchler	Bill Renth
Neil Bolinger	Marc Hoffmann	Ron & Kathy Renth
Terry Booth	Lester Hoffmeister	Roddy Riggs
Tom Chappell	John Hund	Michael Riley
Tom Chesley III	Gerald Joyce	Gene Ripperda
Mark Chestnut	Gordon Kehrer	Stan Ripperda
Debbie Chillson	Wayne Kiefer	Brenda Robinson
Harold Cotten	Dr. William Koentz	Leonard Romano
Shirley Edgington	Denis Kuhn	Dr. Pamela Rout & Dr. Doug Dent
Walter Eversgerd	Tom Lacaze	Norman Rowald
Herman Fauke	Don Laux	Darlene Spaeth
Jill Fischer, Jr.	Gene Laux	Walt Sphilman
Jill Fischer, Sr.	George Lyons	Don Stumpf
Jim Frankovich	Ted Medcalf	Walter Toennies
Tammy Gentz	John P. Miller	Linda Uhrig, MD
Earl Gildig	J.V. "Buddy" Mueller	Ken Von Bokel
Roger Gildig	John Mullin	Elanor Voss
Kirk Graul	Dorothy Musenbrock	Jeannine Wangler
Jerry Green	Dick Muston	Charles Weatherholt
Ollie Haas	Keith Nabe	Truman Weaver
Ben Harpstrite	Joe Netemeyer	Rube Yelvington

It's the hand we clasp with an honest grasp

That gives a hearty thrill;

It's the good we pour into other's lives

That comes back our own to fill.

It's the dregs we drain from another's cup

That make our own seem sweet;

And the hours we give to another's need

That make our life complete.

It's the burdens we help another bear

That make our own seem light;

It's the danger seen for another's feet

That shows us the path to right.

It's the good we do each passing day,

With a heart sincere and true;

In giving the world your very best,

Its best will return to you.