

NEW BREMEN'S FILLING STATIONS

With the coming of automobiles, filling stations began to spring up all over town in the 1920s and 1930s.

On January 20, 1998, Bob Heinfeld of Ada, Ohio paid a visit to the editor of *The Towpath* and passed on his memories of the many "filling" stations that existed in the '30s and '40s in New Bremen. Here are his memories, along with those of Dolores (Schroer) Stienecker, Paul E. Dicke, Karl Warner, Alice (Schmidt) Wissman & others.

The young people of today probably don't know what a "filling" station was - it was the forerunner of the "service" station. There were a number of filling stations in New Bremen, selling a lot of different brands of petroleum. There were two Sohio stations and two Johnson Oil Co. stations (later Sinclair). Filling stations then had the tall pumps where the attendant pumped up the amount of gas the motorist wanted (usually five gallons) into the tall glass cylinder.

Hi-way Hand-Operated Five-Gallon Capacity Visible Gasoline Dispenser, ca. 1923

The symmetrical and attractive design makes this an ideal pump for use in Filling Stations or at the Curb. In its construction many unique and distinctive features have been incorporated, thus insuring the widest possible range of service.

PREDOMINANT FEATURES:

Flood-type electric illumination of the entire pump.

Three gallonage indicators, prominently located on the outside of the glass measuring cylinder.

Two hose discharge connections - one at the front, the other at the side of pump.

Overhead fill located within the glass cylinder.

Speedy horizontal double-acting plunger pump.

Numerous interlocking features - affording equal protection to both dealer and customer.



THAT GOOD GULF GASOLINE

Gulf Oil Company's first drive-in gasoline service station opened in Pittsburgh in 1913. By the following spring, it was selling an average of 1800 gallons per day. Gulf used the slogan "that good Gulf gasoline". This catch-phrase was prompted by a customer's letter written to the company inquiring where one could find "that good Gulf gasoline."

◆ Starting at the south end of town, on the SE corner of S. Washington & Cherry Streets (304 S. Washington), there was the "South Side Service Station." Charlie Block built it in 1928. Charlie was the father of Henry Block, the plumber. As I remember, the original South Side Service Station sold Sunoco gasoline, but in 1934 (1936), when the new station was built at the corner of Monroe & Main, it became the Hi-Speed station. *Wilbur Dennison (he was Julius Hoeper's son-in-law) ran it for two years until March of 1936, when Jack Abbott took over. Later it became a Sinclair station.*

In the fall of 1936, Harry B. & Clara (Topp) Schroer moved into this two-room station (1 bedroom and a kitchen) with their newborn daughter, Dolores, whose crib was a banana box. Their bathroom was the same one used by the public, and Harry installed a shower in the car wash area of the garage. During the eight years or so that they lived at the station, they sold gas, minnows, crawfish, cigarettes, and groceries. They lived there until 1944, when they moved across the street, to the NW corner of South Washington & Cherry Streets (231 S. Washington) and opened their grocery store there.

Paul E. Dicke rented the station from Charles Block on February 1, 1947. In 1950, Paul bought the building and added a cement block building. (In 1960, the station was taken over by Paul's son, Don Dicke, and about 1995-1996, it was purchased by Crown Equipment Corp. Don Dicke continued working there as a mechanic, etc. for Crown until his retirement.)



(1939 Plymouth in driveway - N.B.H.A. photo)

NEW FILLING STATION TO OPEN

Opening of the South Side Service Station, located at South Washington and Cherry Streets, has been announced for Saturday, November 10, 1928, by the managers, Irvin Koeper and Albert Schmidt. A dust cloth will be given free to every motorist purchasing five gallons of gasoline on that day.

Work on the station, which is owned by Charles Block, was started late in September and is being completed this week. It will be the fourth filling station to be operated here - the others being the Refiners, corner of Washington and Monroe Streets; the Lone Pine Station, North Main and Pearl; and the Johnson Station, North Herman Street.

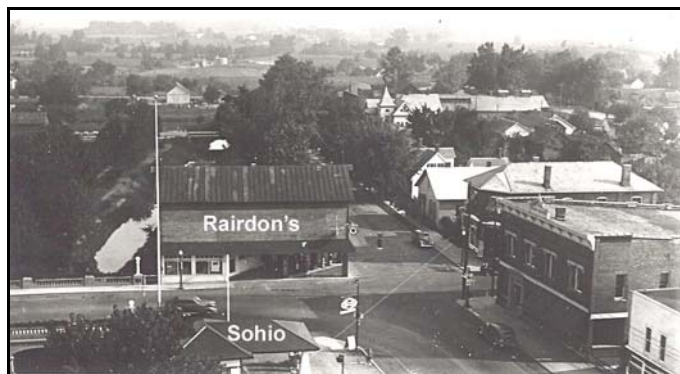
In addition to handling Sunoco gasoline, motor oils and greases, an agency for Dayton tires also will be maintained in the South Side Station. A complete battery sales and service system has been installed, also a machine for washing automobiles.

The station is ideally located because of an expected heavy increase in traffic entering New Bremen from the south with the completion of the last link of paving in the road leading from here to Piqua and then over the Dixie highway into Dayton. (N.B. Sun - 11/8/1928)

◆At the southwest corner of Washington and Monroe (3 S. Washington), we had the Standard Oil Station (Sohio), originally the Refiners Oil Co. (Sohio became a brand name in 1928.) Back in the '30s, it was operated by Harold Mohrman. [Others who ran this station were Alvin ("Pete") Wagner, George Knost, Les Neuman, Paul E. Dicke, Bob Klose, Luther ("Jack") Hirschfeld, Ray Luedeke, and Ted Rollins. In 1967, the original station (see picture, below) was torn down and replaced with a new cement block building. The last person to run this station before it (the "new" station) was torn down (in 1968-70?) was Bud Pratt.] Sohio was a good brand and that was a very popular station. It was probably one of the busiest stations in town.

◆Just south of this station was Teddy Doenges' Tire Shop (7 S. Washington) St.) I don't remember if he had gas pumps there or not, but then he moved to North Main Street and had a curb-side service there. He had two gas pumps just north of Zion's Church where the street is widened. That was the Cities' Service Station. Teddy had his tire shop in there too and sold Dayton Thorobred and Seiberling tires.

◆Across the street from the Sohio station, on the northwest corner of Washington & Monroe (2 E. Monroe), H.W. (Wilbur) Rairdon had a garage and a Texaco station. (see picture below) (This building was torn down and a new Post Office was built there in 1955. By 1960, when the highway was scheduled for widening, the Post Office itself was replaced with another new one that was built on North Main Street.) (N.B.H.A. photo)



◆On East Monroe Street, on the northeast corner of Monroe & Walnut Streets, Virgil Horn (Betty Schroer's dad) had a Pure Oil station, and later sold Marathon gas & oil and Equity ice cream. Betty took care of the station the summer of 1941 after she graduated from High School and her dad went to work at WACO Aircraft in Troy. (see the October, 1991 issue of "The Towpath".) This station was first owned by Clarence Busse and then sold to "Doc" Schmidt who had a Gulf station there. It was run by Harold ("Shorty") Ahlers. They also sold "No-Nox" gasoline. Later on, Goldie Schmidt (sister of Dr. Leonard Schmidt) built a little house on this corner (around 1960?) For some time before that, a man named John Kuhlhorst lived in the station. →

◆On the SE corner of Monroe & Walnut, there was a Pure Oil station for a while that was owned by Alvin ("Socky") Dicke. Two people who worked there were Alvin ("Pete") Wagner and Carl ("Jack") Abbott. That station was moved in 1935 out to Herman Schmidt's station on North Herman St. and added to the north side of the original square station. They had a grease rack, etc. in there (the part shown with open door and Model A Ford.) It was taken down Monroe St. to Herman St. on rollers and then on north out to Schmidt's station. (Notice the dark gasoline pump on the right - it appears to say "Sinclair HI-C Gasoline") The tiny building at the left was used by Henry Heitkamp to make cement dogs.



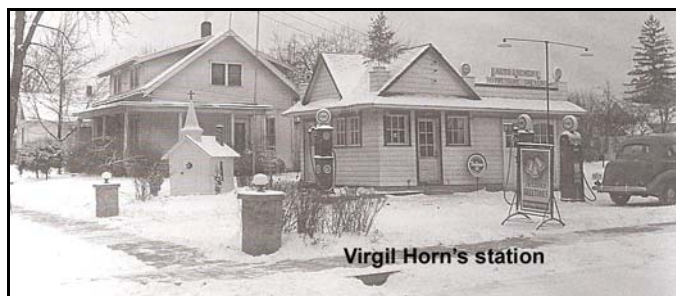
[Photo courtesy of Alvira (Roettger) Schmidt]

◆On the north end of town, on North Herman Street (now State Route 66A), was Herman Schmidt's station, out by the railroad track. This station had been built by Henry Heitkamp. Herman sold Johnson's gasoline, also, and later changed to Sinclair. He had one of the first places to have a ramp (outside) that you would drive up on to get your car serviced (oil changed and greased). You had to crouch underneath the ramp, though, to do it. (The Lone Pine had a grease pit.)

Herman Schmidt's station was the last stop for those on their way to the New Bremen Speedway. Herman sold large home-cooked ham sandwiches for 25¢ and also beer for 25¢. Herman's brother-in-law, Henry Landwehr, worked in the station.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: My dad, Lafe Topp, along with Frank Niemeyer Sr., Max Schurer, Herb Kellermeyer Jr., Forrest Bowers, Don Coble, and others used to play dart ball and sheephead (a card game) here one night a week. Our printer, Larry Lee Kuhn, of Lee's Printing, now (1998) has a used car lot in this location - Lee's Used Cars.↑)

[UPDATE: Now, in 2009, Joe Lochtefeld's "Store N Stuff" is located here.]



(Virgil Horn's Pure Oil station -photo courtesy of Betty Schroer)

◆Now we'll go back southeast to the Lone Pine, at the corner of North Main and Pearl Streets, which probably was the busiest station in town. They sold Sohio (Standard Oil) products there, too. (see *Ken Fark's article in the July 1997 issue of "The Towpath"*)



A Kleinhenz stock truck overturned in front of The Lone Pine Gas Station while rounding the corner of North Main and Pearl Streets (then Route 66). This is thought to have happened in the summer of 1944. This was the driver's last run before going into the service.

◆Further south was Leo Huenke's Garage at 202 N. Main St. - the NE corner of North Main & West Second St. He had a garage first, then sold gas from a double pump out front. It was all joined together - it went straight up and then had two dials. He may have had a rolling tank before that, which he would roll up to cars to fill them. Then Clarence Roettger (Norbert Roettger's dad) had it for a while. He sold Phillips 66 gasoline. I think the "66" stood for the octane rating. As for Sohio, there were three grades of gasoline - Renown, X-70 (that also meant octane rating), and their best gasoline, Supreme. (*Oscar Dammeyer also ran Huenke's Garage at one time.*)

HUENKE GARAGE
AGENCY FOR
FORD CARS
AUTOMOBILE ACCESSORIES
LEO HUENKE, PROPRIETOR CORNER MAIN & SECOND
NEW BREMEN, OHIO
(1920 Mirage yearbook)

◆Continuing south to 24 N. Main Street, at the SE corner of N. Main and W. First Streets, was the Central Auto (Ford) Garage, the former location of the French House Hotel. Ralph Fogt, Francis Hickman, and Ernie Counts built that in June 1931. They sold Johnson Oil Co. products – "Time Tells". There was an hour-glass, and it said "Time Tells". Reinhard Kuck had a bulk plant (Kuck Oil Co.) over by the railroad station and he serviced the Central Auto Garage. Eventually he changed to Sinclair Oil Co. and Central Auto also became a Sinclair station. Later, Ernie Counts went back to Sidney, and Fogt and Hickman sold out to Leroy Schroer and Clifford Quellhorst (around 1945?). →

◆Coming back to Monroe Street, on the SW corner of Monroe and Main (201 W. Monroe), there was a Sunoco station run by Arnold Hegemier, next to the Home Furniture Store. Prior to the gas station, there had been a house on this corner that was owned by Dr. Ferdinand F. Fledderjohann. The house was purchased by the Anna Oil Co. in 1934 and demolished, after which the filling station was built in the winter of 1935, and Sunoco moved here from the South Side Station (*December 1936*). Arnold Hegemier, who had been at the South Side Station, took over the management at the new location. Elmer Kellermeyer worked as Arnold's employee. Across the street was the Kroger Store, formerly the New Bremen Sun Printing Co. and later (still in 1998) Howell's IGA. The Sunoco station was owned by George Gross of the Anna Oil Co. The Anna Oil Co. owned a lot of stations in the area - in St. Marys, Celina, etc. When George Gross died, his wife sold the station to the Pure Oil Co. (around 1945). I worked for Arnold Hegemier for a while, then Irvin ("Butch") Koeper ran it from 1941 until 1943. He sold out to Ralph Fogt, who ran it until 1946, when Edgar Rump took it over. I went to the service and after I got out I worked there again for a little while. [*On September 26, 1946, Edgar Rump took over the management of the Pure Oil Station. In July, 1965, Edgar's son, Edward, Sr. took over the management, and in 1966, the Pure Oil Co. was sold to Union 76. In 1990, Ed Sr. and Ed Jr. built a new station on the SE corner of St. Rt. 66 and Amsterdam Road south of town. They added a beer and soft drink drive-through and became known as Rump's Express Mart. In the fall of 1997, Rump's Union 76 became a Citgo (Cities Service) station.*] (RGH photo)



Central Auto Service (photo from Lilas Quellhorst)

◆ In 1948, Ralph Fogt built a station at 329 S. Washington St., the NW corner of South Washington and South Streets. It was a Mobilgas station for a while, then Marathon, and finally Fleetwing. *(Later this station was run by Bill Meyer. It was torn down in 1995-96 by Crown Equipment Corp., along with the stucco house next door. It is now an open space, with grass and trees.)*



[Photo courtesy of Shirley (Fogt) Black]

When I started working in the Sunoco Station in 1939, they only had one grade of gasoline (the color was blue) and it sold for 17¢ a gallon. In 1940, it went to 19¢ a gallon. Cars were greased for 75¢. There were a lot of fittings to do on a car then - not like today. A car wash cost 75¢ also. The best tire that Goodrich made (6:00 x 16 size) was \$9.95. There were 13, 15, 17, and 19-plate batteries. The 19-plate battery was a very expensive one. It would be used in Buicks, Oldsmobiles, and Cadillacs. I don't remember having any Cadillacs in town back then. Guarantees were unheard of then.

<p>Sunoco Service Station High Powered Sunoco Gasoline and Oil Goodrich Safety Silvertown Tires Exide and Goodrich Batteries Guessing Contest 1st Prize - Goodrich Inner Tube (Value \$2.00) 2nd Prize - Gal. Sunoco Oil, value \$1. 3rd Prize - Polishing Cloth, value 50¢ Arnold Hegemier, Mgr. <i>(1940 Festival adv. - N.B. Sun)</i></p>

Around 1940 New Bremen had its own little gas price war. One station operator visited another station that had two operators. He bragged to them that he was selling a lot of gasoline. The two operators thought he was stretching the truth a little and one of them later said "We'll cut our price from 17¢ to 15¢." They did this and that started the price war. Immediately a third station owner remarked "We'll fix this thing once and for all. We're gonna sell it at 13¢ a gallon." So, the cheapest price we ever had for gas in New Bremen was 13¢ a gallon. That was the same price as kerosene. The price war was short-lived - with 11 gas stations in a town of 1200 people (1940 census), none of them could have been making any money.

I believe that the "filling" station era was over by 1930 and then they became "service" stations. The stations used to give away free maps and handed out sheets of cardboard to put in front of the radiators with, of course, the oil company's name on them. Gulf had a weekly "funny paper" to hand out to the kids. Wilbur Rairdon gave out Texaco Fire Chief hats, which, when they got wet, would make your hair red.

HISTORICAL NOTE: The first official road map was issued by the American Automobile Association around 1905. Around 1914, William Akin, an advertising agency executive, got the idea of oil companies issuing maps for free, using them as advertising as well as for information. Within a year, the Gulf Refining Co. was producing 300,000 maps a year. Soon other oil companies followed suit and free maps became standard, until recent years when the high production costs forced many companies to discontinue this service. *(Dayton Daily News-1/25/98)*

And so you see what was once only a gasoline "filling" station became a full-service station - selling gas, changing and adding oil, greasing chassis, selling batteries, charging batteries, repairing tires, and washing cars. They served New Bremen well.

Today (1998) there are only two public service stations still in existence in New Bremen - Rump's Express Mart (Citgo self-serve) south of town at the intersection of State Route 66 & Amsterdam Road, and the Speedway Station at the SE corner of Washington & Monroe. This is the former location of the First National Bank (Henry Dierker building) which was demolished in 1970, along with the Koeper Shoe Store building. Part of this space was used in the widening of the intersection, adding a left turn lane to St. Rt. 274 and a right turn lane to St. Rt. 66. A Marathon Service Station was built in the remaining space. In 1996-1997, it became a Speedway station (self-serve) and is again strictly a "filling" station.

SOHIO SOLD - KLOSE TO OPEN HOBBY SHOP
(New Bremen Sun - 1/12/1950)

A deal was completed last week, whereby the Cal Sohio Service Station at Washington & Monroe, owned and operated by Bob Klose, was sold to Luther (Jack) Hirschfeld. Hirschfeld is the manager of Johnston's 5 & 10¢ Store, and plans to take over management of the station February 1, 1950.

Klose plans to open a Sporting Goods & Hobby Shop in the business rooms now occupied by Gast's Style Shop, which is quitting business. Klose plans to carry a complete line of sporting goods, fishing tackle, hunting equipment and toys. He will also offer expert rod & reel repair and minor gun repair services. James Pape, jeweler, located in Gast's Style Shop, will remain in with the Sporting Goods store.