



GATHERING AT THE GARDEN

John Kuebler's Home Was Once Newburgh's Most Popular Attraction

When John Kuebler came to **Newburgh** in 1860, his intention was to start a tannery. And in fact, Kuebler became a very good tanner, sending hides all over the eastern United States. But even with that success, Kuebler was far better known for his vineyard and winery. The grounds behind Kuebler's home on Jefferson Street eventually included a lake, a bandstand, a dancing hall, a racetrack, a baseball field, a greenhouse and more. And from 1889 until 1918, Kuebler's Garden was one of the most popular vacation spots in Southwestern Indiana.

Kuebler died in 1918, and the garden wasn't maintained by his family afterward. Today, the gardens have been replaced by a few homes and a public park. The site of the tannery is now the **Newburgh** public swimming pool.

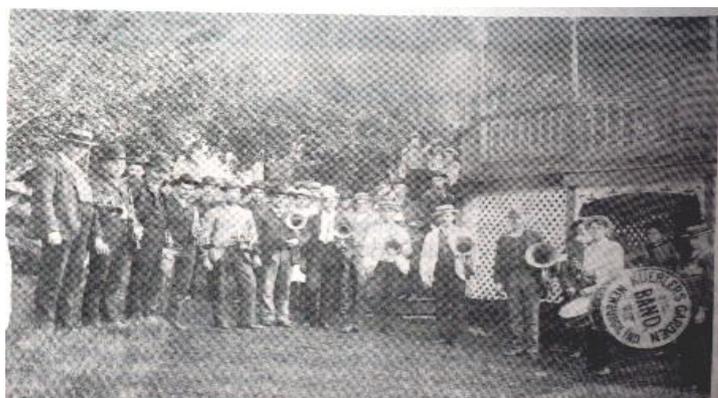
Newburgh Museum Board President Bill Bartelt said many of the people who came to Kuebler's Garden would visit from nearby cities and towns.

"They would come Saturday and Sunday afternoons, and there were Dances Saturday night," Bartelt said. "There were a number of other buildings in the area. There is some discussion that there were cottages for people to rent and stay at. But I don't know that the house was ever used as an inn."

Kuebler was born in Alsace, located on the French-German border in Europe. His father was a farmer and winemaker. So when he settled in **Newburgh**, he was able to put his knowledge of wine to good use. He grew several varieties of grapes, and by 1885 had a crop that was reported at 60,000 pounds. Kuebler also grew flowers, both outdoors and in a greenhouse.

For a few years, most of the visitors to Kuebler's Garden were riverboat travelers. Excursions would come for baseball games, food

But it wasn't until 1889 - when the first railroad reached Newburgh - that Kuebler's Garden became a local sensation.



"When the **Evansville, Suburban and Newburgh** Traction Line came to town, they had a Kuebler's Station," Bartelt said. "Kuebler would come with a horse-drawn vehicle to take people up to the garden area."

Most of the activity was just south of the house, near a large grove of trees. Two large wooden horses on the home's west porch were also popular. Baseball games also drew good crowds during the summer. The Kueblers were known for their fried chicken dinners.

When Kuebler's wife, Philipena, died in 1910, the rest of the family - the couple had 14 children - had to pitch in to help. Kuebler's own failing health limited his business activity for the last years of his life. He died on Sept. 30, 1918. When Prohibition began in January 1920, it was the end of the family's winemaking.

"Prohibition really put an end to it," Bartelt said. "And when Kuebler died, the family was not interested in continuing. There were some things still going on into the 1920s, but by that time the heyday was pretty much over."

