

## Herman Bauer and the Fireman's Parade

by Ann D. Watson

The sun rose over Keyport, New Jersey, at 6:15 a.m. on October 22, 1890.<sup>1</sup> Nearly all the town's merchants and firemen were up early, preparing for the big parade in honor of Keyport's brand-new Holloway Chemical fire engine, due to arrive on the train at the First Street station in a few hours. Fire brigades and marching bands from all over Monmouth County would be participating. Men's voices and the knocking of hammers resounded through town as people mounted ladders and adorned their hotels, saloons, barbershops, and storefronts with bunting and flags.<sup>2</sup>

Down at the Bayside Hotel at the foot of Broad Street, Herman Oscar Bauer combed and waxed his long moustache and oiled his hair before donning his fireman's uniform. Today was an important day for him: he was Assistant Marshal in the parade and would march in front of the whole of Monmouth County.<sup>3</sup> Saying goodbye to his wife Annie and the children, he stepped out onto the sidewalk underneath the overhanging porch roof, and likely stopped for a moment, admiring the red, white and blue bunting adorning his building. Up the street, streamers and flags fluttered in the breeze coming off of Raritan Bay.<sup>4</sup>

Herman set off along First Street toward the Armory, a familiar place because of the Friday night National Guard meetings he attended each week.<sup>5</sup> The waters of Raritan Bay sparkled, gulls whirled overhead, and puffy white clouds sat in the blue sky like scoops of ice cream. Lager beer sent its familiar yeasty odor wafting out of Maurer's saloon on Broad Street, and the pungent odor of fresh horse manure from the livery stables near the Pavilion Hotel blended with the salt air. A cry of "Hello, Captain Bauer" may have caused Herman to turn suddenly as two grinning boys on bicycles wove past him. No doubt he greeted them back.

Reaching the Armory, Herman likely paused at the doorway, straightening his uniform jacket and brushing the dust off his pants. You wanted to make a perfect impression on the crowd when you marched in the front of the parade as Assistant Marshal.

By noon, parade goers were assembling on the streets, commandeering good spots for watching the event.<sup>6</sup> Guests in town for the festivities likely packed the hotels, and saloons almost certainly did a lively business. Fire companies and bands milled around on First Street outside the Armory, the procession's starting point.

As one o'clock approached, the men of Keyport Engine Company Number One were getting nervous. The train carrying the new fire engine still hadn't arrived. The parade was supposed to start at two, and this new piece of equipment was its centerpiece.<sup>7</sup> Although he belonged to Hook and Ladder Number One,<sup>8</sup> Herman may have waited for the train at the First Street railroad station along with other firemen and H. L. Seabrook, Captain of the Engine company.

A little after two o'clock, the train finally came into sight,<sup>9</sup> and a sigh of relief went through the assembled firemen. The gleaming new red painted wagon with its hose reel and padded black leather driver's seat, the sunlight bouncing off the two big shiny copper chemical tanks as it rolled off the train car, was a thing to admire.<sup>10</sup>

Herman probably spent the next hour arranging the many fire brigades and musical bands into position along First and Atlantic streets. Along the way he could have greeted here a farmer who had come to watch the parade, there a fellow fireman or band member. He probably knew almost all the band leaders and fire chiefs from Asbury Park, Ocean Grove, Long Branch, Freehold, Matawan, and Red Bank, as well as many area farmers. Seventeen years as a barber on the main road leading to the steamboat docks,<sup>11</sup> service in the Raritan Guards,<sup>12</sup> singing in the Keyport *Maennerchor*, a German men's singing club,<sup>13</sup> and his own apparently outgoing nature had acquainted Herman with many people. He was often mentioned in the local newspaper, and socialized with many of the town's prominent citizens.

As the hour neared three, the village of Keyport pulsed with anticipation and excitement. Onlookers crammed the streets. Ladies showed off brightly colored dresses or white shirtwaists and skirts. All manner of hats dotted the crowd: straw boaters, ladies' hats trimmed with ribbons and feathers, felt hats, bowlers, and sailor hats. Boys in knickers and caps dodged in and out of the crowd, while children's squeals and laughter mingled with the cries of gulls and barking dogs.

Children sat atop their fathers' shoulders, the better to see the show. Teams of horses hitched to the various fire engines nickered and stamped their feet in anticipation. Politicians mingled, busily shaking hands.<sup>14</sup>

Herman's moment arrived at last. As the eighteen-piece Freehold Cornet Band struck up a tune behind them, Colonel B. A. Lee., Commander of the Third Regiment of the New Jersey National Guard, stepped out in front of the long line, Herman marching several feet behind. After the cornet band came fifty Keyport Engine Company firemen, followed by four big draft horses towing the new engine. No less than twelve fire companies and four musical bands made up the rest of the spectacle. The crowd cheered and the bands played.

This day must have felt like something of a personal celebration for Herman. Just a little over a year before, his wholesale liquor license had been issued and he had begun bottling beer, ale, and other beverages.<sup>15</sup> In March the members of the German men's singing club had chosen him as vice president,<sup>16</sup> and having obtained his saloon license in May,<sup>17</sup> he now ran the Bayside Hotel, which sat two hundred feet from the steamboat slip at the foot of Broad Street. Herman had succeeded in placing himself in the thick of Keyport's business and social life. Seventeen years ago, a sixteen-year-old German immigrant who probably didn't speak English had stepped off the boat;<sup>18</sup> now he joined the ranks of Keyport's notable businessmen and social leaders.

---

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Naval Observatory, Astronomical Applications Department, Sun or Moon Rise/Set Table for One Year ([https://aa.usno.navy.mil/data/docs/RS\\_OneYear.php](https://aa.usno.navy.mil/data/docs/RS_OneYear.php) : accessed 23 March 2019).

<sup>2</sup> "Great Day for Keyport!," *Keyport (New Jersey) Weekly*, 25 October 1890, p. 3, col. 3; *Newspapers.com* : accessed 14 February 2019.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> *By-Laws of Raritan Guard: Company G, Third Regiment, N.G.N.J.: First Organized at Keyport October 8<sup>th</sup>, 1861, as Company B, 4<sup>th</sup> Regiment, N. J. S. M., Admitted into N. J. R. C., as Company E, 3D Regiment, July 6, 1866; Admitted Into National Guard June, 1869* (Keyport, New Jersey: Keyport Weekly Book and Job Printing House, [n.d.]), 4; Monmouth County Historical Association, Freehold.

<sup>6</sup> "Great Day for Keyport!," p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> "List of Members of Keyport H. & L. Co. No 1 of Keyport – N.J.," 8 April 1890, Monmouth County Clerk Series 200, Exempt Firemen Series, 1871–2018, Box 6; Monmouth County Archives, Manalapan, New Jersey.

<sup>9</sup> "Great Day for Keyport!," p. 3.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. For pictures of a chemical engine, see *Fire Truck World – Antique Fire-fighting Equipment Photography* ([www.firetruckworld.com](http://www.firetruckworld.com) : accessed 16 March 2019), path 19<sup>th</sup> Century > 1885 to 1899 > page 4 > 1890 Phoenix Fire Dept. Chemical Engine (11 images).

- 
- <sup>11</sup> 1880 U.S. census, Monmouth County, New Jersey, population schedule, Raritan township, enumeration district (ED) 120, p. 26 (penned), sheet 413 C, dwelling 260, family 292, Herman O. Bouer [Bauer]; *Ancestry.com* (<https://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 17 March 2019). Also, *Monmouth County Directory for 1875, Containing the Names of the Inhabitants of Freehold, Keyport, Matawan, Long Branch and Red Bank: Together With a Business Directory of the Principal Towns of Monmouth County, and Much Other Useful Miscellaneous Information* (Freehold, New Jersey: J. H. Lant, Publisher, 1875), 53; “U.S. City Directories, 1822–1995,” *Ancestry.com* (<https://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 17 March 2019), path New Jersey > Monmouth County > 1875 > Monmouth County Directory, 1875 > image 69 of 146. Also,
- <sup>12</sup> *Report of the Adjutant-General, of the State of New Jersey, for the Year Ending October 31<sup>st</sup>, 1899* (Somerville, New Jersey: The Unionist-Gazette Association, State Printers, 1900), 168; *Google Books* (<https://books.google.com> : accessed 23 March 2019).
- <sup>13</sup> “Maennerchor Officers,” *Keyport (New Jersey) Weekly*, 8 March 1890, p. 3, col. 4; *Newspapers.com* (<https://www.newspapers.com> : accessed 24 October 2018).
- <sup>14</sup> “Great Day for Keyport!,” p. 3.
- <sup>15</sup> “Local Items,” *Keyport (New Jersey) Enterprise*, 8 June 1889, p. 3, col. 3; *Newspapers.com* (<https://newspapers.com> : accessed 21 July 2018).
- <sup>16</sup> “Maennerchor Officers,” *Keyport (New Jersey) Weekly*, 8 March 1890, p. 3, col. 4; *Newspapers.com* (<https://www.newspapers.com> : accessed 24 October 2018).
- <sup>17</sup> “Wall Township,” *Red Bank (New Jersey) Register*, 7 May 1890, p. 1, col. 4; image, “Red Bank Register Newspaper Archives,” Middletown Township Public Library, Middletown, New Jersey. Also, Town of Keyport, New Jersey, Wholesale Liquor Application, H. O. Bauer, 28 May 1890; County Clerk Record Series #400, Tavern Applications, 1736–1919, Monmouth County Archives, Freehold.
- <sup>18</sup> “New York Passenger Lists, 1820–1891,” database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org> : accessed 3 January 2018); path 356 - 22 Apr 1872-3 May 1872 > image 440 of 506; citing NARA microfilm publication M237, roll 356. Also, “U.S. Passport Applications, 1795–1925,” *Ancestry.com* (<https://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 12 January 2018), entry for Herman Bauer, no. 22011, 25 November [18]90; citing NARA microfilm publication *Passport Applications, 1795–1905*, roll 361.