

The Cane Story

Electronic mail message from Paul Koehler

Grandfather Christian Koehler (Kohler) by today's standards, was a good business man and had his own business. (Born 26 August 1852) He was assisted by his two sons (the youngest of six children) David and Peter (Peter was my father). Some of the items they manufactured were canes, all kinds of buttons, shoe horns, musical horns, pipe and cigarette holders, etc. The material they used were horns from cattle. In those days, almost every farm had a number of cows. Horns were removed from cattle only one time when they were about a year old. The horns were picked up by the Koehler Manufacturing Company. The horns, when heated properly, could be made into any of the above listed items.

Most of the manufacturing was done in the winter time. Due to the cold weather, traveling was restricted to the village of Stahl am Taryk, Russia. When spring came, the snow and ice melted, it was easy to travel on the Volga River again. Grandpa would fill a number of boxes, load them on the river boat and travel to villages and cities, along the Volga River to sell his wares. He traveled south to the Caspian Sea and sometimes as far as the city of Armavir, which is north of the Caucasus mountains. Grandpa also traveled north to Saratov.

While I was growing up in Berrien Springs, Michigan one of the cow horn canes hung in our living room. Now that Dad and Mom have passed away, that cow horn cane hangs in my living room and we figure it is about 150 years old.