



Remembering Don Sommer

Don Sommer often had a twinkle in his eye. If you knew him well, you can picture this moment: something would strike Don's funny bone, and he'd throw back his head and let loose a wholehearted laugh, spreading joy to the far corners of whatever room he found himself in.



Born on July 9, 1930, in Kidron, Ohio, Don was the son of the late Lloyd and Anna (Amstutz) Sommer. On March 18, 2026, he died peacefully at home at Danbury Senior Living in Wooster, Ohio.

Early in his life, Don found the twin passions that would shape his next nine decades: music and community.

By the time he got to high school, Don played multiple team sports and even more instruments. He was the quarterback for Dalton High School's football team, and he won first place in a state-wide marimba competition.

As a student at Goshen College in Indiana, Don sang in as many choirs and quartets as his schedule allowed. Also at Goshen, Don met and married his first wife, Barbara Brubaker (deceased 1988).

After graduating, the couple moved to Kidron and started a family, ultimately raising four children. In Kidron, Don joined the family business-L.E. Sommer & Sons, Inc.-and initiated and conducted music endeavors in the community, including The Seven Last



KIDRON COMMUNITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Recognition Banquet for Members and Volunteers

THE VILLAGE BARN
SONNENBERG VILLAGE GERBER-NUSSBAUM BARN

TUESDAY, JUNE 2, 2026 | 6:00 PM

BUSINESS MEETING AND RECOGNITIONS TO FOLLOW

RECOGNITIONS

MEMBERS AND VOLUNTEERS

WAYNE LIECHTY

RAY & ALLYSON LEISY

JOHN & JANET SPRUNGER FAMILY

RSVP BY WEDNESDAY, MAY 20

330-857-9111 (LEAVE MESSAGE)

KIDRONHERITAGECENTER@GMAIL.COM

Words, a choral and orchestral work by Joseph Haydn.

A few years later, Don and family moved east for Don to earn a master's degree in choral conducting at Westminster Choir College in Princeton, New Jersey. During graduate school, he sang Handel's Messiah at Carnegie Hall, with Leonard Bernstein conducting.

Then, Don and family moved home to Kidron again-this time to stay. He rejoined L.E. Sommer & Sons, Inc., a four-generation agricultural business. Don was well-loved and respected by the local farming and business community. Always, he strove to run the business with integrity and compassion.

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At the same time, Don was Kidron Mennonite Church's founding Minister of Music, a role he cherished and held for years. He shared his musical gifts with the community in many other ways, too, including by conducting Handel's Messiah annually, teaching music at Central Christian High School, singing tenor for 25 years in the Cleveland Orchestra Chorus, and helping to orchestrate Laurelville Mennonite Camp's summer family music week. He had the privilege to collaborate with composer Alice Parker on numerous projects.

To these many professional and artistic endeavors, Don brought the fundamental kindness and gentleness



of spirit that made him who he was. After Barbara's passing in 1988, Don found love again and married Linda Zuercher. Together, they enjoyed a life full of family, travel, and—of course—music. Don's family grew to include Linda's loving family. He and Linda enjoyed gardening at their Kidron condo before moving to Danbury Senior Living last year.

Don is survived by his wife of 37 years, Linda Sommer; children Hugh Sommer, Lynn Sommer (Scott Weaver), and Kristen Sommer Benjamin (Evan Benjamin); grandchildren Rachel Sommer (Matthew Sware), Hans Weaver (Vanessa Hofer), Ari Benjamin (Kate Dildy), and Rose Benjamin (Julian Kraus-Polk); great-grandchildren Rhoda Sware, Thea

Weaver, and Greta Weaver; sisters Carol Yoder and Ann Troyer and sister-in-law Carol (Fred) Brubaker. He is preceded in death by his wife and the mother of his children, Barbara Brubaker Sommer (d. 1988), and by his son, Jon Sommer (d. 2024).

A memorial service celebrating Don's life was held on March 28 at Salem Mennonite Church.

In lieu of flowers, Don's family suggests supporting the music program at Central Christian School or the Kidron Community Historical Society.

Checks can be written to CCS, PO Box 9, Kidron OH 44636. Contributions can be made online at www.ccscomets.org/support (designate music program).

To support the Kidron Community Historical Society, make checks in memory of Don Sommer payable to KCHS, PO Box 234, Kidron OH 44636.

Glass Plate Negatives Added to Museum Collection

Glass photo negatives, commonly used between the 1850s and 1930, are early photographic images created by coating glass plates with light-sensitive chemicals (collodion or gelatin). They offered superior stability, sharpness, and detail compared to paper negatives.

The collodion plates required immediate development, and the later gelatin plates, invented in 1871, allowed development at a later time. The plates in the KCHS museum are gelatin dry plates. This type resulted in perfectly even, smooth coatings and thinner glass and was more convenient, as it didn't require immediate processing before the emulsion dried.

Before cellulose nitrate film was invented in 1903, photographic emulsions were made on glass supports, more typically known as glass plate negatives, enabling amateur and professional photography to flourish. The two separate glass plate negative photographic methods (wet and dry) both consist of a light-sensitive emulsion fixed to a glass plate with a binder. In 1851, at almost the same time, Frederick Scott Archer (1813-1857) and Jean-Baptiste Gustave Le Gray (1820-

1884) produced the first collodion wet plate negatives. Wet plate negatives were produced by spreading a glass plate with collodion, bathing it in silver nitrate, and then exposing it in a camera. The photographer had to wait for the exposure to be completed before the wet plate dried and was protected by varnish. It was almost completely replaced by the more convenient gelatin dry plate process, which was invented by Richard Leach Maddox (1816-1902) in 1871. It was a more practical process and was replaced in popularity by gelatin silver plate negatives and then celluloid roll film.

Glass plate negatives were sold "ready to use" and are heavy and fragile, requiring care to prevent breakage of "glass disease" (flaking emulsion). Collectors and historians can find original antique plates through specialized vintage retailers such as Etsy and eBay.

The KCHS museum has a set of about 24 glass plate negatives that show pictures taken on and around the farm that David (1859-1947) and Catherine (Zimmerly 1858-1952) Zuercher owned on Kansas Road south of Orrville at the time. The heritage homestead is currently owned by Darrel and Mary Lou Zuercher.

Resources: South Street Seaport Museum; Jesuit Archives UK.



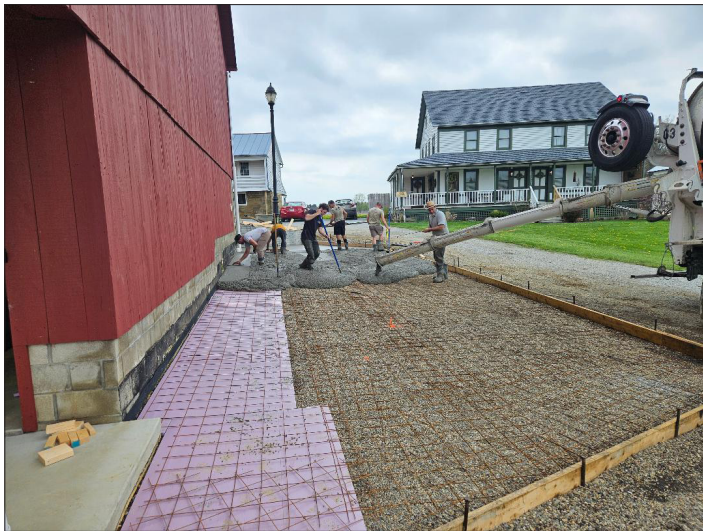
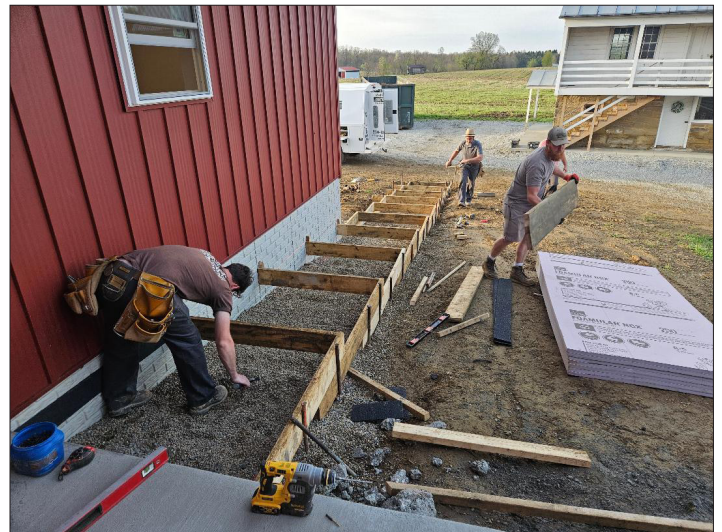
Sonnenberg Village

Renovating The Village Barn: An Event Venue

Art Neuenschwander is overseeing the construction of the addition to the southeast corner of The Village Barn. The goal is to provide a space for rental and village events that will include a warming kitchen and restrooms. Recently the forms for the walkways on the west side of the barn were set and cement poured.

An open house of the renovated barn will be held for the public on Friday, June 5, 5-8:00 pm. The come-and-go event will include refreshments. Lorie Troyer is the Sonnenberg Village events coordinator. She can be reached at 330-641-3377 to answer questions about The Village Barn and to schedule a visit to see what The Village Barn can offer.

Rachel Hofstetter and Master Gardener Nancy Lilburn are carefully overseeing the Sonnenberg Village gardens and flower beds.



UPCOMING KCHS EVENTS

Annual Business Meeting and Members Banquet

Tuesday, June 2, 6:00 pm Sonnenberg Village The Village Barn
Volunteers, Wayne Liechty, Ray & Allyson Leisy and
the John and Janet Sprunger family will be recognized

The Village Barn Open House

Friday, June 5, 5:00 - 8:00 pm | Sonnenberg Village The Village Barn
Come and Go | Refreshments

Orrville Community Band

Saturday, July 18, 1-00 pm | Sonnenberg Village The Village Church

Kidron Community Historical Society
P.O. Box 234
Kidron, Ohio 44636

330-857-9111

kidronheritagecenter@gmail.com

www.kidronhistoricalsociety.org

Nonprofit Organization Postage Paid Wooster, Ohio 44691 Permit No. 228

Address Service Requested

SPRING 2026



Kidron-Sonnenberg Heritage Center

13153 Emerson Road • Kidron, Ohio

OPEN APRIL through OCTOBER • SATURDAYS • 11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

CLOSED NOVEMBER, DECEMBER, JANUARY, FEBRUARY, and MARCH

The Heritage Center is closed November through March, but welcomes appointments to visit the museum and Sonnenberg Village.

Call and leave a message at 330-857-9111 for information or to schedule an appointment.

The Kidron Community Historical Society of Kidron, Ohio, founded in 1977, operates under the nonprofit charter granted by the State of Ohio. Your tax deductible gifts will help secure the future of the Historical Society and give you a part in preserving the heritage of this unique community.

Administration

Board President	Art Neuenschwander	Board Member	Sherri Steiner
Board Vice President	Veryl Kratzer	Board Member	Diane Sommer
Board Treasurer.....	John Slater	Heritage Center Director	Max Gerber
Board Secretary	Gloria Kaufmann	Sonnenberg Village Event Manager.....	Lorie Troyer
Board Member	Steven Miller	Sonnenberg Village Project Manager.....	Jim Swartzentruber
		<i>Bit o' Vit</i> Editor.....	Judie Nussbaum

Kidron Community Historical Society Membership

Annual memberships are due in January and expire on December 31. Contact the Heritage Center if uncertain of your membership status.

Name _____

Address _____

Type of Membership _____ New Renewal

Membership Fee \$ _____ General Donation \$ _____

Would you like a receipt? Yes No *Thank you!*

Individual Annual Member \$30

Husband and Wife Annual Member..... \$45

Organization Annual Member..... \$50

Individual Life Member \$300

Heritage Club Member \$1000 or more

Send checks to Kidron Community Historical Society • Box 234 • Kidron, OH 44636