

St. Francis Historical Society NEWSLETTER

Spring 1989

4235 South Nicholson Avenue
St. Francis, Wisconsin 53207
(414) 481-2300

1989 - 1990 OFFICERS

President Ron Tessmer
Vice President Adele Lenz
Recording Secretary Millie Schimelfenyg
Treasurer Margaret Szymkowski

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ron & Marge Tessmer 744-0653
Joanne Richards 744-3167
Diane Johnston 483-5883
Chris Barney 744-5833
Adele Lenz 482-0594
Kathy Schwingle 744-0873
Millie Schimelfenyg 769-6575
Margaret Szymkowski 483-0455

COMMITTEES

Cataloging Laura Staats - 481-9849
plays Marge Tessmer - 744-0653
Newsletter Chris Barney - 744-5833
Arts and Crafts Margie Heidenreich - 483-7882
Membership Bob Schwingle - 744-0873
Publicity Adele Lenz - 482-0594
Tours Diane Johnston - 483-5883

ST. FRANCIS HISTORICAL SOCIETY:
WE ARE
“SERIOUS ABOUT NOJOSHING”

**“ST. FRANCIS/OLD TOWN OF LAKE
AREA TRAILS”**
by Chris Barney

“HISTORY . . . WHY RECORD IT?”

Looking at 75- to 100-year-old photographs of St. Francis and other parts of the old Town of Lake, I am fascinated by how different the land area and the area's lifestyle was, compared with the lifestyle of today. Even more fascinating to me, however, is reading and researching the lives of the pioneers who carved a life out of the rugged (and sometimes alarmingly inhospitable) areas with their diverse composition from marshy to thickly forested with maples and other native trees. Men of vision, such as Elijah Estes and Jared Thompson (and their wives, of course), helped to shape Bay View and St. Francis, originally called Nojoshing (“Tongue

Continued on page 3

APRIL 24th GENERAL MEETING

The next general meeting of the St. Francis Historical Society will be held Monday evening, April 24, 1989 at 6:00 p.m. at the St. Francis Community Center, located at 3476 East Howard Avenue. The meeting will begin with a “pot luck” supper followed by the program for the evening. The entertainment will be provided by Mr. John Otis who will be presenting his photo collection of churches in Wisconsin. For several years, Mr. Otis traveled extensively throughout the state taking photographs which marvelously detail the varied styles of church architecture, many of which have fallen to the wrecking ball and are thankfully preserved on film.

RE-CAP OF 1989 ANNUAL MEETING

The annual SFHS meeting for 1989 was held on Monday, January 30th at the St. Francis Community Center. A pot luck supper was enjoyed by all and entertainment was provided by Mr. Dale Kuntz, president of Milwaukee Film Classics, who presented a program of film clips which he assembled, produced and narrated, entitled “Musical Stars of the 1930's and 1940's.” During the intermission between the supper and the program, regular business was held, including the election of board members and appointment of officers for 1989-90. New board members Marge Tessmer and Joanne Richards were elected to 3-year terms, and regarding the selection of 1989-90 officers, Ron Tessmer was installed as President, while Adele Lenz, Millie Schimelfenyg and Margaret Szymkowski were retained as Vice President, Recording Secretary and Treasurer, respectively.



LOCAL HISTORY WORKSHOP

Our historical society was the host for a workshop sponsored by the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, held at St. Francis High School on Saturday, April 8th. The session consisted of three workshops: "Restoring Older Buildings: Doing It Right"; "The Museum School Connection"; and "Fund Raising." Board members Ron and Marge Tessmer, Kathy Schwingle and Margie Szymkowski were on hand to serve refreshments and register people for the workshops. Several representatives of SHS of Wisconsin were on hand to present the workshops, which were very well received by the approximately 50 people attending. The cost of each workshop was \$5.00, which was apparently well worth the expense, according to the favorable comments from a number of workshop participants.

LOOK FOR US ON CABLE

According to board member Kathy Schwingle, our general meeting notice is posted on Paragon Cable channel 26 - if you lose this, look to the tube for guidance!! (City of St. Francis residents only.)

UPCOMING PROJECTS

Lakeside Power Plant Gatehouse - An offer has been made to our society to donate the gatehouse building to us, providing a suitable location can be procured to relocate it. SHS officers and board members are weighing the cost involved as well as historical significance and usefulness of the structure before proceeding. More on this in a future issue.

Thompson School 50th Anniversary - Our officers and board members are collaborating with school officials to arrange a reunion of all students who attended Thompson School since the present school was first erected by the old Town of Lake. It opened in the fall of 1938 and replaced an earlier structure which dated from the 1850's and was added to in about 1908. Any former Thompson students, their children and grandchildren, who would either like to participate in the reunion and/or contribute old class photos (for display or as a gift), or any former student who would like to contribute an interesting story, experience or anecdote relating to their experience at Thompson, please come forward - no contribution is too small!! Please call Ron Tessmer at 744-0653 for details. More later . . .

Lake Protestant Cemetery - Officers and board members are considering the recruiting of outside help to complete the sorely needed restoration work in and about the cemetery grounds. In addition to placement of headstones and plot markers, it has been suggested that an attractive fence be erected around the cemetery, enhancing its appearance and deterring vandalism. This action has been tabled pending further investigation of options.

Lake Water Stop and Town Hall Bldg. 50th Anniversary - The old Town of Lake Water Works and Municipal Building will celebrate the 50th Anniversary of its formal opening on Saturday, January 20, 1990. The building now houses two City of Milwaukee agencies: the Lake Health

DISPLAYS

A pictorial display of **Lakeside Power Plant** is being planned for late summer at St. Francis Public Library and possibly at St. Francis Days. The library display is subject to the approval of the library and its board. Some of the artifacts recovered from the plant may also be shown with the display. Bob Schwingle and Chris Barney will act as liaisons in procuring photographs from Wisconsin Electric archives in addition to the photos in the society's collection.

The **City of St. Francis Fire Department** turns 35 years old on June 6th, and Fire Chief Bob Schwingle will be "beating the brush" for S.F.F.D. memorabilia from current and former fire department members and their families to create a fittingly handsome display, also scheduled for sometime this summer. Calling on Chief Bob's expertise, we know this display will be "hot."

Still in the preliminary discussion process is a pictorial display on St. Francis Seminary's **Henni Hall**. No projected date for this display has been announced. If you have an idea for a display you'd like to see or would like to offer assistance or expertise for a current or projected display, contact Ron or Marge Tessmer at 744-0653. Thanks!!

Center and the city's south district engineers. It is also home to the award-winning Lake Band. SHS board member Chris Barney is presently gathering data, statistics and photographs on the structure to have it certified as a city historical structure. The tower/hall, along with the Norwich Street North Shore R.R. overpass, was designed by architect and consulting engineer William Darby of West Allis. Ground was broken ceremonially on December 23, 1937, by town chairman Cornelius Schneider, architect Darby and other town officials including town supervisor Frank Calteux.

It cost more than a million dollars to build and was paid for jointly with town and federal funds. It served St. Francis and a portion of the Town of Lake until April 8, 1954, when the town was consolidated with the City of Milwaukee.

The tower, located at 4001 South 6th Street, is no longer a functioning part of Milwaukee's water works system. Barney's proposed plans for a 50th anniversary ceremony include the re-dedication of the plaques which were affixed to the Norwich Street bridge (razed in August 1988) in the rotunda of the tower/hall; a pictorial display of the building's history with statistical information where possible; and the dedication of the building as a city historic structure with the affixing of an informational historical plaque, if possible, by the City of Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission. It is also hoped that some of the original town officials and board members from Town of Lake, St. Francis, and Cudahy's Nicholson and Silverdale sections, will be located and able to attend the re-dedication ceremony. If any former Town of Lake residents are interested in this project and would like to participate and/or assist, please call Chris Barney at 744-5833 weekday afternoons after 2:00 p.m.

of Land") by the Indians who vacated it in favor of the Yankee settlers from the East, into the fine communities we enjoy today. The going was not easy for these early settlers, and it usually took many years to clear even a portion of the 80-acre tracts of land purchased from the U.S. government at one dollar per acre. But the pioneers persevered, with the help of their sons, daughters and generations to follow, and in doing so shaped a legacy for us to build upon, and look back upon, with fondness and appreciation.

Most of us have heard our elders (parents, grandparents, etc.) talk about the "good old days" when things were different (and usually better). And when they tell it they are usually looking away, at a window or a picture on the wall. However, it is not their outward eyes that are doing the focusing, their attention is centered on their mind's eye, a human sort of "VCR" that preserves those memories and recollections which most profoundly touched their lives. Some memories are sketchy, others are vivid, all of them have a deep and special meaning to the person doing the remembering; and put together they make up a chronology of that person's life or, more succinctly, their "life history."

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS

We issue an enthusiastic "Welcome Aboard" to the following new members: Don and Pat Majdecki, Kenneth McManus, Sigmund and Mildred Mroz, Donald and Darlene Ortin, Alan and Joanne Richards, Donald and Kathy Scott, Dorothy Sylvester, and Esther Pyter. SFHS is a "growing" family; ask a friend, relative or neighbor to join us!! For membership information, contact Bob Schwingle at 744-0873.

WE HAVE NEEDS

Doing your spring cleaning? Throwing those old, useless boxes away? STOP!! We are in dire need of any and all serviceable boxes to pack catalogued historical items, according to catalog committee chairperson Laura Staats. This will prevent damage from occurring due to dust, sunlight, etc. Laura also told us she could use a few very large boxes, such as washer/dryer boxes, refrigerator boxes or other boxes in that size range, to pack some of the larger items since they may have to be relocated in the not too distant future. If you have leads, boxes or both - call Laura at 481-9849. In addition, Laura says that anyone who would like to be in direct "touch" with our past can assist her in cataloging and/or packing at either or both of the next two sessions scheduled for Saturday, June 3rd and Saturday, June 10th beginning at 12:30 p.m. Part of each session will consist of the permanent affixing of catalog numbers to items by methods of ironing on, gluing and/or lacquering of the numbers. Cataloging and sorting is done at the Thompson Grade School which the society is currently using as office and storage. If you'd like to help but have questions, call Laura a call!!

DEED OF GIFT FORM

Our society has adopted a standardized "Deed of Gift" form for future donations. This will better assist us in cataloging and will serve as a more appropriate way of thanking the donor and acknowledging his/her gift. — 3 —

As a historian, researcher, writer, and interviewer, I have had the opportunity to interview a number of original St. Francis and Town of Lake residents, and I find that just listening to them is a joy. This is especially true when a name, picture, place or date I have uncovered helps to stimulate a fuzzy memory ("Oh, yes, Chris, that's right, how did you know that?"), or enliven an already stimulating story ("What a lovely picture - wasn't that a beautiful building?"). History books are interesting, but there is nothing to compare with "live history." It captures a spirit impossible to recreate on the page of a book or in a photograph and is truly entertainment in its supreme form.

And so they came . . . and stayed . . . and prospered . . . and passed these things on, through the generations, to us. We, the officers, board and committee members of St. Francis Historical Society, feel a responsibility to carry these traditions forward for the benefit of future generations. We do not look upon this as a duty but as a loving trust which, hopefully, our children will carry forward as well. For we are not only recording history, we are living it, too. To use a pun mildly, we are "Serious About Nojoshing."

OTHER HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

On Sunday, May 28th, the **South Milwaukee Historical Society** will be holding its first Open House of the season at the society's historical museum. The society is also looking for local family histories for their archives. For further information or details, contact the society's President, Rick Tangen, at 762-2499.

The seventh annual **Milwaukee County Historical Society Antiques Show and Sale**, a major midwest antiques event, will be held in the magnificently restored Grain Exchange Room of the Mackie Building at 325 E. Michigan Street in downtown Milwaukee on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, September 29th, 30th, and October 1st. Hours for the show will be Friday, 11:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday, 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Admission per person will be \$4.00 in advance and \$5.00 at the door. This event is highly recommended by a number of antique publications. For details, contact Milwaukee County Historical Society at 273-8288.

WHERE IS IT?!

Our society is keenly interested in the whereabouts of the original (pre-1938) Thompson school bell used to summon children to class, and a few other "uses" . . . if anyone has an idea - or even a wild notion - where the bell might be located, call Bob Schwingle at 744-0873.

NAME THE NEWSLETTER

If anyone can think of a fitting name and/or logo for our newsletter, submit your ideas to Chris Barney at 744-5833 (afternoons after 2:00 p.m.), or drop him a line at 931 E. Morgan Avenue, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53207.

TELL US A TALE

If you have a story or experience about something that took place in St. Francis or old Town of Lake, and you'd like to share it with us, drop it in the mail to Chris Barney at the above address, or give Chris a call any weekday afternoon at the above number - we'll print it.

1989 - 1990 DATES TO REMEMBER

April 24, 1989 General Membership Meeting
 6:00 p.m., St. Francis Community Center
 Pot Luck Supper - Program: Mr. John Otis,
 Photo Collection of Churches
May 3 Board Meeting, 7:30 p.m.
 Thompson School
June 7 Board Meeting, 7:30 p.m.
 Thompson School
July 5 Board Meeting, 7:30 p.m.
 Thompson School
July 31 General Membership Meeting,
 St. Francis Community Center
 (time to be announced - Program: Mr. Matt
 Josephs, The History of the Automobile
August 2 Board Meeting, 7:30 p.m.
 Thompson School
September 1, 2, 3 St. Francis Days
 Memorial Park
September 6 Board Meeting, 7:30 p.m.
 Thompson School
September 29 - October 1 Milwaukee County
 Historical Society Antiques Show and Sale,
 Mackie Bldg. Milwaukee

October 11 Board Meeting, 7:30 p.m.
 Thompson School
October 14 Milwaukee County Historical Society
 Regional Convention
 (place and time to be announced)
October 30 General Membership Meeting
 St. Francis Community Center
 (time to be announced)
 Program: Mr. Paul Turney
 Archaeology in St. Francis
November 1 Board Meeting, 7:30 p.m.
 Thompson School
November 5 Arts and Crafts Show, St. Francis
 Community Center (time to be announced)
November 11 Wisconsin Council on Local History
 Annual Convention, Madison (place and time
 to be announced)
January 3, 1990 Board Meeting, 7:30 p.m.
 Thompson School
January 29 Annual Membership Meeting,
 St. Francis Community Center, 6:00 p.m.
 Pot Luck Supper (Program to be announced)

Newsletter
 St. Francis Historical Society
 4235 S. Nicholson Avenue
 St. Francis, WI 53207

