

# 'NOJOSHING'

The official Newsletter of the St. Francis Historical Society

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

Spring 1990

## 1990 - 1991 OFFICERS

President ..... Ron Tessmer  
Vice President ..... Diane Johnston  
Recording Secretary ..... Millie Schimelfenyg  
Treasurer ..... Margaret Symkowski

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ron & Marge Tessmer ..... 744-0653  
Carl Baehr ..... 483-4202  
Joanne Richards ..... 744-3167  
Diane Johnston ..... 483-5883  
Chris Barney ..... 461-5869  
Kathy Schwingle ..... 744-0873  
Millie Schimelfenyg ..... 769-6575  
Margaret Symkowski ..... 483-0455

## COMMITTEES

Cataloging ..... Laura Staats - 481-9849  
Displays ..... Marge Tessmer - 744-0653  
Historic Preservation ..... Carl Baehr - 483-4202  
Newsletter ..... Chris Barney - 461-5869  
Arts and Crafts ..... Joanne Richards - 744-3167  
Membership ..... Bob Schwingle - 744-0873  
Programs ..... Diane Johnston - 483-5883  
Hours & Trips ..... Kathy Schwingle - 744-0873

## ST. FRANCIS HISTORICAL SOCIETY:

### WE ARE

**"SERIOUS ABOUT NOJOSHING"**

## ST. FRANCIS/OLD TOWN OF LAKE AREA TRAILS"

by Chris Barney

### "LUCKY LINDY'S LAKE LANDING"

The following is an article which appeared in the Milwaukee County Historical Society's **Historical Messenger**, appearing in its Summer 1977 issue. The article was written by George Hardie, Jr. and entitled, "Lindbergh in Milwaukee." Mr. Hardie, who has been documenting Milwaukee County's aviation growth since the 1930s, is considered by many as the foremost historian of General Mitchell International Airport. The article is reprinted by permission.



Pioneer aerial photographer Albert F. Toepfer photographed Charles A. Lindbergh and his "Spirit of St. Louis" at Milwaukee County Airport in the Town of Lake, August 20, 1927.

(Photo Credit - Courtesy Milwaukee County Historical Society)

### Lindbergh in Milwaukee

by George Hardie, Jr.

No single event in history affected the development of aviation as did the solo transatlantic flight made by Charles A. Lindbergh on May 20 and 21, 1927. The worldwide acclaim accorded the young airmail pilot for his daring feat made him an "instant expert" on things aeronautical, at least in the eyes of the press and the public. His every word on the subject was given respectful consideration, and his opinions were regarded as coming from the highest authority.

Lindbergh was equal to this sudden responsibility that was thrust upon him. On his return to the United States, he was bombarded with lucrative offers seeking his endorsement of all sorts of products, and he was even offered the lead in a movie about his adventure. The serious, restrained Lindbergh refused them all, preferring to direct his efforts to furthering the infant aviation industry. But when Harry Guggenheim, president of the Guggenheim Fund for the Promotion of Aeronautics, proposed a tour of the forty-eight states, Lindbergh eagerly accepted. He saw this as a great opportunity to promote the establishment of suitable airports and to demonstrate the reliability of air travel.

The tour by "Lucky Lindy" was scheduled to start from Mitchel Field, Long Island, on July 15, 1927. The mayor of each city along the planned route was sent a letter offering to include that city as a stop. In view of the public clamor to see their new hero, it is amusing to read in the letter sent to Mayor Daniel W. Hoan of Milwaukee that "Colonel Lindbergh, if you care to have him, will be in your city about

August 20." Naturally, the proposal was accepted immediately. The letter was gently specific on what was expected in planning the program. Arrival time was to be 2:00 p.m. (Lindbergh's "on time" record for the entire tour was phenomenal for that era.) An open air meeting at which he could address the crowd was to follow at 3:30 p.m. and he would be available for press interviews from 4:30 to 6:00 p.m. At 7:00 p.m. a formal dinner would be held at which Lindbergh would speak; this was to conclude by 9:00 p.m. so the flier could rest.

Mayor Hoan promptly appointed a reception committee headed by Charles C. Younggreen, president of a Milwaukee advertising agency and a World War I aviator. A controversy about which airport to use for the ceremonies ensued immediately. Maitland Field had been established recently on the lakefront, named for Lieutenant Lester Maitland, Milwaukee's native son who had been the first to fly across the Pacific Ocean to Hawaii. Some said that civic pride demanded the festivities be located at this downtown field to demonstrate its usefulness. However, the county's airport near Cudahy, now General Mitchell Field, was the base for airmail and the recently inaugurated passenger air service. Many people, particularly fliers, advocated that Lindbergh land at that field, contending that Maitland Field was unsafe. Eventually the latter plan prevailed. Lindbergh would land at Milwaukee County Airport at 2:00 p.m. From there a motorcade would proceed east to Cudahy, then north to the city via Kinnickinnic Avenue and Broadway to Clybourn Street, west on Clybourn to Twenty-sixth Street, north to Wisconsin Avenue and down the Avenue to Juneau Park, where Lindbergh would give his outdoor address at 3:15 p.m.

Saturday, August 20, dawned clear and cool, an ideal day for the event. Thousands gathered at the airport, anxiously awaiting the arrival of their hero and hoping to catch a glimpse of him and his airplane. Promptly at 2:00 p.m., Lindbergh and "The Spirit of St. Louis" arrived over the field. After circling and giving a short exhibition of flight maneuvers, he landed and taxied to the hangar where the welcoming committee was waiting. Introductions were made, photographs were taken and the triumphal procession of fifteen automobiles left the field. All along the parade route thousands lined the curbs and cheered as the flier passed. By the time Wisconsin Avenue was reached, it became necessary to speed up the pace in order to meet the scheduled arrival in Juneau Park. This caused some criticism from the spectators, some of whom caught only a fleeting glimpse of their hero after waiting hours to see him.

More crowds of people lined the banks of Juneau Park to hear Lindbergh. A stand had been erected on the Lincoln Memorial Bridge and, from this vantage point, the official welcome was given. After an introduction by attorney Chauncey W. Yockey, Lindbergh wasted no time in explaining why he was making the tour. His opening remarks underlined his resolve:

It is the purpose of this tour to aid in bringing about the next step in the advancement of aviation. The time has arrived now when the airplane has a definite place in the commercial life of the country.

It is now possible to build commercial planes for purely commercial purposes. We are now entering the era of commercial aviation. One of the most urgent needs is to have fields close to centers of towns similar to the one that is here under construction.

As Lindbergh left the scene to be taken to the Hotel Astor, he remarked to a reporter, "This is the most orderly reception of any I've received so far." He was to experience many disappointing contacts with the public before his tour was completed.

In the press interview later in the afternoon, Lindbergh praised Milwaukee for its progress in aviation. Refusing to discuss personal matters, he again emphasized that his mission was to advance aeronautics. When asked what the average man could do to help promote aviation, Lindbergh had a ready answer. "The average man," he declared, "can promote aviation by backing the development of air fields and by patronizing air facilities."

More than 800 diners were present that evening at the Hotel Pfister to honor the young aviator. Typical of the eulogies delivered by the speakers were the remarks of Mayor Hoan, who said:

In Lindbergh is embodied every noble characteristic that any good man should have. If he has inspired the children of Milwaukee with only a few of these characteristics, his trip has been worthwhile indeed.

Lindbergh did more for us in Europe than all of our diplomats in the last one hundred years. Personally, I'd rather have Lindbergh in the capitols of Europe tonight than all the ambassadors, all the consuls — and all the whole shootin' match!

Lindbergh confined his remarks to his favorite subject. After a standing ovation which lasted more than four minutes, he pleaded for silence. He began, "It has been with great satisfaction that I witnessed today how Milwaukee has connected the theme of aviation with this visit. The purpose of this tour is to promote aviation in the United States and I feel that here it has been accomplished."

He apologized for the speed of the parade down Wisconsin Avenue, explaining "On an air tour of this kind we have learned the necessity of making rules. We would like to spend several days in each city but find it impossible. I want you to know that we would like to take more time to spend in the city of Milwaukee but such a thing would be impossible if we are to finish our tour on time."

In his closing remarks, Lindbergh again emphasized his purpose. "In conclusion I want to thank the people of Milwaukee for the interest they have shown and sincerely hope you will continue to show this interest in aviation."

Sunday was a day of rest for the flier and his party. He was the honored guest at industrialist Clarence Falk's country estate on Green Bay Road. Milwaukeeans who were privileged to share this visit were Charles Younggreen, Alderman Cornelius Corcoran, John Anderson (vice president of The Milwaukee Electric Railway and Light Com-

pany), and Stuart Auer (a realtor and World War I aviator). Thirty deputy sheriffs guarded the grounds to prevent intrusions.

On Monday morning, August 22, Lindbergh departed in his "Spirit of St. Louis," headed for Madison. Enroute he dipped his wings at the Soldiers' Home at Wood, Wisconsin, and at Resthaven Hospital in Waukesha to honor the invalid war veterans. He headed north over Oshkosh before proceeding to Madison where another day of festivities awaited him.

The Lindbergh tour continued westward, stopping at principal cities to bring his message promoting aviation and allowing Americans to see and hear their hero of the hour. All forty-eight states had been touched upon when Lindbergh and his "Spirit" finally returned to Mitchel Field on Long Island on October 23. He had visited 82 cities and delivered airborne messages to another 192. Only once had the pilot's schedule been missed, when dense fog prevented his landing at Portland, Maine. A total of 22,350 miles had been flown, and it was estimated that as many as fifty million Americans had seen the man and his airplane.

A few days after Lindbergh's visit to Milwaukee, some conservative residents had second thoughts about the value of these receptions for public heroes. (The bills were being presented for payment at this time.) Alderman Corcoran vowed that the city had been "cured" of participating in any future events. But Milwaukee would honor several other pioneer aviators in the next decade. On May 13, 1928, the city played host to the Bremen Fliers, first to cross the Atlantic from east to west. On July 27, 1931, Wiley Post and his navigator, Harold Gatty, who had just completed a record flight around the world, were feted. And on August 21, 1938, Douglas "Wrong Way" Corrigan, who had crossed the Atlantic to Ireland, was honored by Milwaukeeans. Looking back, it can be seen that the glamor and excitement of these events were important in making Milwaukee receptive to the age of aviation.

Editor's Note: This is the first of a series of articles on the growth and development of the Town of Lake's Milwaukee County Airport (later renamed General Mitchell Field). Next Time: Growth Despite Depression and War.

## GENERAL MEETING - APRIL 30TH

The next general meeting of the St. Francis Historical Society will be held on **Monday, April 30th** at the **St. Francis Community Center, 3476 East Howard Avenue**, beginning with a potluck supper at **6:00 p.m.** The general public is invited to attend - simply bring a food dish serving 6 - 8 people. If you plan to bring a dish, please call Kathy Schwingle at 744-0873 so we have an idea of how much food will be brought. The business portion of the meeting will follow at approximately 7:00 p.m., preceding a program given by **Milwaukee Reflections, Ltd.**, entitled "*Portraits of Milwaukee Women*" - a veritable Victorian striptease spotlighting eight outstanding Milwaukee women, dressed in the elegant finery of yesterday's Milwaukee. The program

promises to both escort you into history and make today's Milwaukee sparkle! As usual, admission to our meetings is free of charge. Come on down and bring your family and friends - we offer great entertainment at a very reasonable cost - you'll be glad you did!!

## RE-CAP OF JANUARY 29th ANNUAL MEETING

The meeting began with our traditional potluck dinner, followed by the business portion of the meeting where President Ron Tessmer welcomed the members and our guest speaker. Marge Symkowski gave the usual treasurer's report, followed by Ron's description of the activities our society was involved in during 1989. Carl Baehr was unanimously elected as a new board member while Kathy Schwingle and Millie Schimelfenyg received unanimous reelection. All will serve a three-year term.

Guest Earl Peters then entertained us by showing and describing his collection of Coca-Cola items which were given as door prizes - a pocket puzzle went to Ron Tessmer, a visor cap to Al Richards, a plastic glass to Grace Broskowski, and a frissbee was won by Lois Neubauer. Our society wishes to thank Mr. Peters for his interesting presentation!

## DO YOU REMEMBER . . . . . . THE AIRWAY THEATER?



*Billed as 'Milwaukee County's Newest and Finest Suburban Theater,' the only movie house ever built in the Town of Lake, opened on Tuesday, January 18, 1949. The above photo of the Airway, which stood at 4001 S. Howell Avenue was taken by the famous Murdoch Studio on February 18, 1949. The Airway, like many neighborhood theaters, became a victim of the switch to shopping center and other outlying movie complexes. It closed its doors in 1967 and was razed to make way for the First Wisconsin National Bank which now occupies the site.*

## PROJECTS IN PROGRESS

- St. Francis city officials have still not acted on our society's request to move the **Lakeside Power Plant Gatehouse** to St. Francis Memorial Park. A meeting is expected soon. The cost of restoring the structure is also being investigated by board members. Another item in question is

whether the gatehouse can be moved on its concrete foundation or not. Updates will appear in future issues of this newsletter.



*A 1938 sketch of the tower/municipal building by architect William Darby.*

- On February 27, 1990, the City of Milwaukee Common Council unanimously approved a resolution designating the **Town of Lake Water Tower and Municipal Building**, 4001 South 6th Street, as a historic structure. The action culminated two years of research and associated efforts by SFHS board member Chris Barney to accomplish the historic designation. The structure has operated continuously as a water utility since December 1, 1939. The tower and municipal building, originally dedicated January 20, 1940, may possibly be the only example of its kind ever constructed in America. A 50th anniversary re-dedication will be planned, but is not expected to take place until late summer or early fall of this year.

## COMMITTEE REPORTS



### • DISPLAYS — MARGE TESSMER

I am putting together a display of the camera - the Kodak was invented in 1888 and first offered in 1890, so we are celebrating its 100 years with a display at the St. Francis Library. The display is to begin May 7th and run for 3 weeks. If anyone has a camera or related material they would like to display along with our society's camera display, please contact Marge Tessmer at 744-0653, leave a message with my answering service, or contact any board member. Any items loaned for display will be kept under lock and key and will be promptly returned to the owners after the display is over. Thanks.

### • HISTORIC PRESERVATION — CARL BAEHR

I am the newest society board member, and would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to both the society members, for their unanimous vote in appointing me to the board, and to the board members and officers for my appointment as chairman of this important committee. At the present time I am engaged with St. Francis city officials in the drafting of a historic preservation ordinance for the city, with language within the ordinance authorizing the creation of a Historic Preservation Commission,

similar to the one created by the City of Milwaukee. The ordinance will be reviewed as drafted and I will then consult with the legislative committee to refine language as necessary. This legislation is necessary to prevent the future demolition of historically significant buildings in St. Francis such as the home on Whitnall and Ahmedi which was a former stagecoach stop, and the former post office building at Kinnickinnic and St. Francis Avenues. If passed, such an ordinance could certify a structure for state and federal funds for restoration. If you or someone you know has a structure you think is historic, call me at 483-4202. I am compiling a list of historic homes for potential review by the new commission. Thanks for your confidence!

### • CATALOGING — LAURA STAATS

I have spoken with the board, and have informed them that cataloging sessions for this year will not begin until June or July. If you or someone you know would like to assist me during these upcoming sessions, please call me at 481-9849. Thanks!

### • TOURS AND TRIPS — KATHY SCHWINGLE

We have had several suggestions for the one-day or overnight trips during the warmer weather months. The first tentatively scheduled trip is to the historic Cedarburg area on Saturday, May 12th. Pooling several cars, we will meet at a designated place at 8:00 a.m. Proceeding north to Cedarburg, we will spend the day touring a winery, antique shops, the Cedar Creek pioneer settlement, and several other historic sites. Time will be provided for a lunch at your own expense. A separate mailing will be sent to society members providing trip information and a sign-up form to mail in. This is an opportunity for us to get to know each other better and have some fun in the process! Other possible trips include the Mid-Continent Railway Historical Society in North Freedom, an overnight junket to the Manitowoc Maritime Museum including stops at the old Wade House in Greenbush and 19th-century settlements in the Kettle Moraine area, a car pool trip to the EAA Museum in Oshkosh, and a car pool to Stonewood Village in Brookfield (see following article) which may include an overnight camp-out! Trip and tour suggestions are always welcomed!! Contact Kathy Schwingle at 744-0873. Thanks.

## HEAR YE! HEAR YE!

Be sure to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the ending of the American Civil War by joining the merchants of Stonewood Village in Brookfield on July 7th and 8th, 1990 for their annual American Revolutionary Days. Bob Reiser's Revolutionary Group will hold a troop encampment throughout the colonial style village grounds. Experience history in action. Enjoy funfilled days starting at 9:30 a.m. with officers' call and ending at 5:30 p.m. with colors. Some of the events of the days will be artillery weapon demonstrations, men and women's fashion shows, cabin viewing, duels, cooking demonstrations and much more. So join us at Stonewood Village, 17700 West Capitol Drive, Brookfield, WI on July 7th and 8th. For more information please call 781-9703.

• **MEMBERSHIP — BOB SCHWINGLE**

We are always on the lookout to increase our membership, so as an incentive to our current members, the board has decided to offer a free "St. Francis" t-shirt for every new member recruited. The shirt alone equals the cost of membership dues - \$5.00 - and for that you receive a quarterly newsletter, notification of quarterly meetings, an associate membership with the State Historical Society, and notification of discount tours and trips arranged by our society. Give us a new member and we'll give you the shirts off our racks!! Call me at 744-0873, thanks.

• **NEWSLETTER — CHRIS BARNEY**

In trying to make this newsletter more interesting I have, in this past year, tried to incorporate new and varied features such as events going on elsewhere in our area and in other parts of the state, plus articles and short reminiscences of events from our own area archives. In addition to making it readable, I have tried to incorporate pictures where possible in an attempt to create a "visually interesting" read as well. However, I derive the most satisfaction when a St. Francis or Old Town of Lake area resident comes forward with a story or even a brief family history. It is my hope that the enjoyment of a revived, pleasant memory - gathered in after reading this publication - will spur a phone call or a letter to this writer/editor with special memories of their own to share with their friends and neighbors . . . people like you and me. Call me at 461-5869 or write to me at P.O. Box 1631, Milwaukee, WI 53201. Thanks for your benefical comments and suggestions - keep 'em coming!!

• **PROGRAMS — DIANE JOHNSTON**

Programs tentatively scheduled for 1990 are: Milwaukee Reflections, Dale Kuntz from Milwaukee Film Classics, a Civil War-era band, and Archaeology in Bay View. Programs are subject to change. If you have a suggestion for a program, call me at 483-5883. Thanks.

## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK . . .

One of the hottest issues facing communities in southeast Milwaukee County today is the topic of the runway expansion asked for by officials of General Mitchell International Airport. Heated discussion, pro and con, has been going on concerning this issue in all of the affected communities - St. Francis, Cudahy, South Milwaukee, Oak Creek, Franklin, Greenfield and Milwaukee. Both the airport and its neighbors have experienced rapid growth since the 1950's - and there seems now to be little room left for continued growth. Hotly contested topics such as noise, destruction of neighborhoods and parks, and the actual need for airport expansion, versus the airport's economic impact on Milwaukee County seem to have no clear and unquestioned answers. The reason I am running a series of articles on the airport's history and growth is to spur thought and discussion within the St. Francis community. Let me know what your thoughts or suggestions are - for or against, or any alternative you have regarding the airport issue. I look forward to your comments. Write me at P.O. Box 1631, Milwaukee, WI 53201.

Take care and God bless!

Chris Barney

## BOARD DIRECTIONS

- At the February meeting, the board unanimously approved the appointment of Diane Johnston as vice-president, and the re-appointments of Ron Tessmer, Millie Schimelfenyg and Marge Symkowski as president, recording secretary and treasurer, respectively. All officers serve a one-year term.
- We are looking for two general members not on the society's board to assist the chairpersons of our committees: Cataloging, Displays, Historic Preservation, Newsletter, Arts and Crafts, Membership, Programs and Tours/Trips. Any help would be graciously accepted. If anyone is interested, call the committee chairperson at the numbers listed on page 1 of this newsletter. We are interested in meeting our membership, and would really like to know in what areas you are interested to be active.
- Three of our board members, Ron Tessmer, Kathy Schwingle and Diane Johnston, will contact members of the St. Francis Library board to again request using the library's vacant basement space for storage and display of our archives and historic artifacts, since we have been requested to vacate our facilities at Thompson School at the end of this year.
- Ron has suggested a Local History Week for St. Francis which would run from July 22-28, and would consist of special school programs, special reminiscences by longtime residents, a tour of Seminary Woods, and a tour of our society's archives room at Thompson School. The board approved the creation of a fact-finding committee to formulate plans for the event.

## SETTING IT STRAIGHT . . .



*In our last issue, this 1936 photo of the Town of Lake firehouse at Howell and Howard Avenues was printed, but Chief Adolph Schuster, who guided the department from 1924 to 1946, was incorrectly listed. He should have been listed as third from left.*

*(Photo Credit: Courtesy of Richard Schuster)*

## HISTORY AROUND US . . .

The following is a look at news from other historical societies in the area and the state:

- The guest speaker for the **Milwaukee County Historical Society's** annual awards banquet on **Tuesday, May 1** will be Milwaukee Brewer's owner and president **Allan H. (Bud) Selig**, whose topic for presentation will be "**Brewer Baseball: The Return of the Major Leagues to Milwaukee**," a recounting of those trying times of making arrangements to fill the gap in professional baseball created by the departure of the Milwaukee Braves after the 1965 season.
- The **Oak Creek Historical Society's** Pioneer Village and Museum Complex, located at Forest Hill and 15th Avenues, will not be open every Sunday between the Memorial Day and Labor Day weekends this year, as was the case last year. It will be decided at the April board meeting which Sundays the complex will be open.
- The 1990 **Local History Workshops** will be held in **Menasha** on **April 21** and in **Stanley** on **May 5**. The workshops are sponsored by the **State Historical Society of Wisconsin**, and this year feature the following topics: "The Local Historical Society and the Genealogist;" "The Museum-School Connection;" and "Caring for Museum Collections." For registration information, call **Tom McKay** in the office of local history at **(608) 262-3266**.

- "**Preservation '90: Rediscovering Our Past**," is the program being presented by the **Wisconsin Trust for Historic Preservation** on **May 11-12** at the **Radisson Inn Green Bay**. It is being co-sponsored by several Green Bay area historical societies. Topics include, "Heritage Corridor in Eastern Wisconsin," "Community Character: Planning to Retain It," and "Researching a House History: Using Local Records." For more information about the conference call **Larry Reed** at **(608) 262-4771** or **Bill Meindl** at **(414) 729-4770**.

---

## 1990 DATES TO REMEMBER

- April 30th** . . . . . General Membership Meeting  
St. Francis Community Center, 6:00 p.m.  
Program: "Milwaukee Reflections:  
Portraits of Milwaukee Women"
- May 2** . . . . . Board Meeting, Thompson School - 6:30 p.m.
- June 7th** . . . . . Board Meeting, Thompson School - 6:30 p.m.
- July 12th** . . . . . Board Meeting, Thompson School - 6:30 p.m.
- July 30th** . . . . . General Membership Meeting  
St. Francis Community Center, 6:00 p.m.  
Program to be announced

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