

'NOJOSHING'

The official Newsletter of the St. Francis Historical Society

Winter 1991

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ST. FRANCIS HISTORICAL SOCIETY:
WE ARE
"SERIOUS ABOUT NOJOSHING"

ANDREW KOENIG: 1911-1990



(Courtesy of Kathy Smith)

The SFHS Family was saddened to learn of the sudden passing of charter member Andrew J. Koenig, descendant of a pioneer St. Francis family, on November 13, 1990.

Andy grew up on the family farm on Packard and Howard, and later bought the home and greenhouses of his

grandfather, John Paulu, a St. Francis politician and civic leader in his own right. Andy operated the greenhouses for many years before selling off portions of the property after building a grocery store on a part of the land, which he rented out and then sold, according to a long-time family friend. That building is now known as Supreme Meats.

Andy lived in the Paulu house until the mid-1960s, when he moved near the airport on Logan Avenue. The house was bought in 1970 by Jerry Kasprzyk, who operates and owns the Maytag store in front of the house. The store once served as the boiler room for the greenhouses, according to a 1986 article by Mary Becker.

An avid motorcyclist, Andy also was a licensed, private airplane pilot who, for many years, owned a light plane and kept it hangared on Layton Avenue.

In addition to his involvement with our society, Andy also worked as a security guard in his later years. Harking back to his childhood days, Andy once related to a family friend about seeing city founder and meatpacker Patrick Cudahy 'hiking down K.K. Avenue on his way to work' one morning. (Cudahy died in 1919.)

Andy, who never married, is survived by nieces, nephews, other relatives and friends all over Bay View, St. Francis, Cudahy and southeast Milwaukee. He will be long remembered for his caring and concern for his family and his community.

(See elsewhere in this issue an interview with Andy Koenig - Ed.)

KATHRYN SCHWINGLE — 1933-1990



Kathy Schwingle, President of the St. Francis Historical Society in 1979, 1987 and again in 1988, died December 18th at the age of 57.

Kathy was a staunch supporter of the St. Francis

Historical Society, and was involved and very instrumental in its original formation in 1976. She was an elected Director currently serving in her fifth consecutive three-year term. She maintained a strong guiding voice within the Society and was a very active fund raiser for the Society.

Most recently, Kathy was chairman of the trips and tours committee and set up several very interesting and well attended tours. The most recent of which was a tour of Manitowoc's Maritime Museum and Christmas at the Pabst Mansion. She was someone who could always be depended upon to be available when help was needed regardless of the nature of that help.

Her avid interest and knowledge in regards to collectibles and antiques was invaluable to the Society and she readily shared this knowledge with the Society.

Kathy was currently serving as the Metropolitan Region Representative on the Administrative Committee of the Wisconsin Council for Local History, an office to which she was elected during the Metropolitan Regional Convention hosted by the Wisconsin Slovak Historical Society on September 15, 1990.

Kathy was born in southern Illinois in 1933 and has been a resident of St. Francis since 1953. She married Robert "Pee-Wee" Schwingle, a life-long resident of St. Francis, and its fire chief until his retirement last January 4th.

In addition to her husband, Robert, Kathy is survived by sons: Raymond D. (Shelly) and Robert Jr.; grandchildren: Nola, Mary, Kathryn and Andrew; sisters: Audrie Greaning of Danville, IL, and Edythe Jergens of Michigan City, IN; and brother: Lloyd (Frances) Miller of Mission, TX.

Kathy's insight, energy and directness will be sadly missed by our Society as we carry on the many things she began.

RE-CAP OF OCTOBER 29TH GENERAL MEETING

The meeting, originally scheduled to be held in the Frank Lupo house, was instead held at St. Francis Community Center due to a power outage at the home. At the center, President Ron Tessmer discussed suggestions on what historical period in which to decorate the house once our society is allowed to use the structure. Suggestions included the 1910 period, when the house was built, or the 1951 period, when the city was incorporated. Other topics included security in and around the house, climate control for storage of artifacts, and the care of the facility. Ron also discussed the Society's purpose in preserving history. Guest Scott Enk discussed preserving the Norwich St. bridge over the C&NW. The meeting was well attended.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

• ARTS AND CRAFTS — JOANNE RICHARDS

The Arts and Crafts Fair, held November 18th, was a huge success. The Society netted \$935.30 from the event. Thanks are extended to all who attended and participated in the event.

• TOURS AND TRIPS

Ron Tessmer reported the tour of the **Pabst Mansion** in December was well attended and worthwhile. Twenty-five adults and six children in attendance all enjoyed the event.

THE STREETS OF ST. FRANCIS

By Carl Baehr

(Second of a series)

Portions of what is now St. Francis were originally meant to be part of the Village of Cudahy. In 1892, Patrick Cudahy announced his plans for the founding of an industrial town with his meatpacking plant as its base. The prosperity of the times was in evidence throughout the county. Huge buildings like the City Hall and the Pabst building were being built in downtown Milwaukee. South Milwaukee was being developed by inventors. Bay View was expanding southward and parts of St. Francis were being subdivided.

Land speculators and real estate developers, some of whom were Patrick Cudahy's friends and business associates, began buying land in the area around the site of his plant. The names of some of their subdivisions reflected their intentions and their optimism.

Among them were Cudahy Heights (now part of Mitchell International Airport), Cudahy Station (West of the Northern Rail Car Company), and Cudahy Park. The area now being developed west of Layton Mart was platted in October of 1892 and was called "Sivyer and Betz Addition to the Townsite of Cudahy." The development companies followed a similar pattern with names like Cudahy Central Land Company, Cudahy Beltline Realty Company, and Cudahy Improvement Company.

Developers, in an effort to integrate with Patrick's Cudahy, followed his street naming scheme in their plans. Avenues with names of meatpackers like Cudahy, Armour, Layton, and Plankinton began to show up on plat maps of subdivisions.

The panic of 1893 put an end to many of these planned developments. While Patrick Cudahy was able to continue with his plans, the growth of the area was not as vigorous as hoped. In 1894, the mechanism for incorporating the Village of Cudahy was started. A census of the proposed village was taken. Notices were posted throughout the area.

The proposed northern border was what is now Waterford Avenue. The western edge was to be Pennsylvania Avenue. However, the landowners to the north of Lunham

Avenue filed an objection to the plan. They did not want to be part of the village. They could not afford to operate their farms and pay village tax rates. They said their land was too sparsely populated to be considered part of the village. There were only 11 houses in this section. Farmers in the western section, between Barland Avenue (then known as Axtell Avenue) and Pennsylvania Avenue, protested for the same reasons. There were only 18 houses in their area which extended south to Grange Avenue.

The judge agreed with them and they retained their rural status (although part of the western section would later become part of Cudahy through annexation). Decades later their lands became urbanized, and many of the streets which came to criss-cross their fields brought names with them showing their earlier connection with Cudahy.

The series of east-west streets between Pennsylvania and Nicholson Avenues which carry names from the genealogy of the Cudahy Brothers meatpacking business are examples.

Layton, Plankinton, Armour and Cudahy were all, at one time or another, partners in a firm that traces its roots to Milwaukee's infancy. John Plankinton began his meat business in Milwaukee in the mid-1840s. Frederick Layton merged his own business with Plankinton's in 1852 under the name "Layton and Plankinton." At the dawn of the Civil War, the pair split up. Then in 1863, Philip Danforth Armour joined Plankinton and formed the Plankinton and Armour Meatpacking Company, a relationship that lasted until 1884. From 1884 to 1888, Patrick Cudahy was a partner of Plankinton and Company. Then Plankinton retired and Patrick and John Cudahy took over and the company name was changed to Cudahy Brothers (later changed again to Patrick Cudahy Company).

The first of the line, John **Plankinton** (1820-1891), born in Delaware, lost the distinction of having a St. Francis street named for him when Plankinton Avenue was changed to Price Avenue in the 1930 Town of Lake street renaming project. Besides the Plankinton Avenue in Cudahy, he has a second street named in his honor, this one west of the Milwaukee River in downtown Milwaukee.

English-born Frederick **Layton** (1827-1919) also has a Milwaukee street named for him in addition to Layton Avenue. Layton Boulevard (27th Street between Lincoln Avenue and the viaduct) was named as a tribute to the man who contributed so much to Milwaukee's art heritage.

Philip Danforth **Armour** (1832-1901) came from the state of New York to Milwaukee before the Civil War and left the city for Chicago around 1875. In Chicago, he became one of America's wealthiest men as president of the world's largest meatpacking company.

Patrick **Cudahy** (1849-1919), a native of Ireland, was from a Milwaukee family of five brothers who were successful in the meat business. Among them they founded at least three meatpacking companies. In addition to Patrick and John's Cudahy company, brothers Michael and Edward owned the Cudahy Packing Company, with plants all over the country, it was one of the "Big Five" of Chicago. John

also owned Cudahy Packing of Louisville, Kentucky.

Other streets named by Patrick Cudahy that extend westward into St. Francis are Van Norman, Allerton, Bottsford, and Whittaker. George **Bosworth Van Norman** owned a Milwaukee livestock commission business which purchased livestock, mostly pigs, from stockgrowers and farmers and then sold the animals to meatpackers. Van Norman was instrumental in the "booming" of South Milwaukee. He was among a group of land speculators who hoped to draw potential home buyers to the area to work for the factories the group planned to entice there. Van Norman was president of the Eagle Horse Shoe Company which was located in South Milwaukee. With this experience, he assisted Patrick Cudahy in developing the Cudahy area.

Allerton Avenue is named for Samuel Waters **Allerton** (1828-1914) who was in the meat business and was based in Chicago where he ran for mayor at the time he was having a street named for him in the Cudahy area. He started his career as a cattle buyer in his native state of New York. He became a cattle grower in Illinois in the 1850s. Just before the Civil War, he moved to Chicago as a livestock commissioner and later, after the war, he started a packing firm in Chicago. He had interests throughout the Midwest and when he died "owned more actual farming land than perhaps any man in America."

With Henry **Botsford** (who spelled Botsford with one 't', unlike Bottsford Avenue), Allerton formed the Chicago National Stockyards Company, the largest of its kind in the world. Botsford was born in Ann Arbor, Michigan and traced his ancestry to colonial America. He died in Chicago in 1919, a few months prior to Patrick Cudahy's death in Milwaukee.

Francis **Whittaker**, a St. Louis meatpacker, was, like Patrick Cudahy, born in Ireland. He learned the meatpacking trade in County Sligo at a time when Ireland was the world's major meatpacking center, a distinction eventually lost to the United States.

The Northern border between St. Francis and Cudahy was named for Robert Thomas **Lunham**, a Chicago pork packer who was born in County Cork, Ireland.

A number of north-south street names which continue into St. Francis from Cudahy were also named for those in the packing industry.

Thomas **Lipton**, an Irishman born in Scotland, was more famous for his tea business than his Chicago and Omaha packing interests. He was also well known during the first third of this century for his five challenges for yachting's revered America Cup. In spite of naming all of his yachts "Shamrock," he never had good enough luck to win.

Thomas and Samuel **Kingan** were also Irish packers who set up operations in the United States. In addition to their Belfast business, the company had plants in Cincinnati, Indianapolis, and Kansas City.

William **Kirkwood** was a commission agent in Chicago and helped support Frederick Layton's art gallery in Milwaukee.

Gustavus Franklin Swift, born in Massachusetts, built a large national meatpacking business headquartered in Chicago. His company was second in size to only Armour's.

Hately Avenue was named for two English brothers, John and Walter Hately, who came to America in 1873. They established a packing house in Chicago.

While these St. Francis streets did not become part of Cudahy, their names do reflect their place in early Cudahy history.

(This series will continue in future issues - Ed.)

OUR FAMILY TIES:

*An interview with Andy Koenig at his home,
4561 South Logan Avenue, Milwaukee, May 16, 1988
by Chris Barney*

(The following article contains excerpts from the Koenig interview)

I interviewed Andy on this Monday afternoon intending to get information on his grandfather, John Paulu, an influential Town of Lake architect and civic leader between the 1880s and about 1920. I got much more than I asked for. He first reflected on his recollection of his 'Grandpa John': "He built two houses on K.K. Avenue; the first one, which burned, was built about 1890 - the one he built to replace that one was built about 1914 - that's still standing." Andy also spoke of the greenhouses adjacent to the house which, for many years, were operated by Paulu's sons. "When they quit running them, I took over," recalled Andy. He also spoke of the many area churches John Paulu designed and helped to build. "Other than them (the churches), I don't recall him building anything else (of significance)," recalled Andy. "He built a few (local) taverns and would run them until he found a buyer for them - they were on the south side, as I recall being told. I also remember seeing some blueprints on a big board in the living room of the (1914) house," Andy related to me.

When asked what particular offices his Grandpa John had held, Andy related that "he was (town) chairman and a county board supervisor; in those days (around 1900), anytime you became town chairman you were automatically made a county supervisor; he also served in the (state) assembly and was a justice of the peace - I remember hearing of jury trials being held in his living room."

Feeling more comfortable and talkative now, Andy began to draw more 'gems' from his memory vaults. I asked him about old St. Francis: "That was built up around St. Francis Avenue, where the old post office was; it (the post office) was mostly for post office boxes. My grandfather had a box there for quite a while; I also remember when we boys served daily Mass (at Sacred Heart), one of our jobs was to go over to the post office and get Father's mail." The Chicago and North Western Depot, near the Rail's Inn, also came to mind: "It was more of a mail drop than anything

else; it had the old hook and arm where the mail was dropped off and picked up - sometimes it (the mail) ended up on the ground. That mail was, I think, for the boxes at the St. Francis post office; most of the homes in that area were served by Station 'D' in Milwaukee." (Station 'D' is now known as Bay View/St. Francis Station).

The conversation then turned to Andy's memories of political families from St. Francis: "I lived near the families of Paul Welbes and Connie Schneider - they originally both lived on the Lake Road (now South Lake Drive); their families farmed there. Later they (Paul and Connie) both moved over on K.K. Avenue, near Sacred Heart. Paul Welbes ran a tavern just south of St. John's School for the Deaf, on the east side of the street. He had a 'horse shed' in back of the tavern - it was kind of a lean-to with a wall to the north, where the prevailing winds usually came from. You just parked both the horse and buggy in there when you went to church - that also gave people an excuse to 'stop in' the tavern after Mass," recalled Andy, chuckling.

I asked Andy about his original homestead, on the northwest corner of Packard and Howard: "The Community Center stands on part of our 80-acre parcel of land - the house is still there; it's well over a hundred years old. It's been remodeled over the years." When asked about his father, Andy couldn't volunteer much: "I was only 10 or 12 when he died; I was told he was a salesman - then he worked at Federal Rubber Company in Cudahy. It seems like just about everybody worked there that I knew. After Lakeside Power Plant was built, a store was built in front of our house, and my father sort of took care of that, as I remember."



Andy at about age three.

(Courtesy of Kathy Smith)

The primitive roads of the early 1900s brought a few interesting comments from Andy: "Thompson Avenue was paved with crushed stone, and we used to walk on the side of the road in our bare feet. Once the stones were worn down by traffic, the walking was easier, but for a while after fresh stone was first laid, it was really hard on your feet; you tried to walk in the ditch as much as you could." On K.K. Avenue: "It was never in my memory a dirt road, it was always paved. The interurban tracks ran down the center of the road; there were bricks paved around them." The mention of the interurban cars of the Milwaukee-Racine-Kenosha electric line provoked another amusing memory:

“The interurban cars were ‘deluxe’ models; they even had a toilet on them. But they (the toilets) were only used south of my Grandpa John’s house, at Waterford Avenue, where the train left the road and ran along the side of the road next to the North Western tracks. Before it left the road, the toilets were always locked. The reason for that was because when you used the toilet, it just ‘dropped’ out. The toilet was locked again when the train went back on the road in Cudahy, and then unlocked again somewhere in South Milwaukee. I think it stayed off the road then until the train got to Racine.”

I wondered what Andy remembered about the effect the Lakeside Power Plant utility taxes had on improvements in St. Francis: “I think most of that money went into upgrading schools and keeping taxes down; no one ever got out of paying taxes entirely - there was always the school tax. The utility tax money only covered the property tax portion. As far as other improvements, such as roads and other services, I don’t recall much changing in that respect.”

Contrary to the many recreational games and activities available to today’s youth, Andy painted quite a different picture of his boyhood: “There wasn’t much recreation for kids back then; we would (ice) skate wherever we could find some ice. I had a small pair of skis I would use by the old gravel pit back up in the field (near the Koenig home). We went swimming an awful lot - an aunt and uncle of mine had a farm right square on the Lakeside Power Plant site, and we would swim in the lake there. After the Electric Company bought their farm they moved to Cudahy. Other than that, the only ‘recreation’ we had - if you could call it that - was filling the wood box and taking out the ashes,” recalled Andy with a wry grin.

One other exciting event - an annual one - also came to Andy’s mind: “When we were kids, I remember that every September, when we saw big piles of soft coal in front of different houses, we knew the threshing machine was coming. They burned coal for steam (to power the thresher); it belched thick, black smoke. They had a small crew to operate it; they went around with the machine - wherever people grew grain - and the neighbors would help each other (by going from farm to farm). That was a big ‘event’ to watch that.”

Andy also spoke of Howard Avenue: “The reason I was told that Howard Avenue didn’t go through east of the North Western tracks (between Iowa and Pennsylvania Avenues) was because the land was too swampy to support a road; I think celery fields were there. And the portion of Howard between Packard Avenue and the Lake Road - it ran past the Reinert farm - was called ‘Cinder Road’ because it was paved with cinders instead of crushed stone; we never could figure out why. It was harder on bare feet than the crushed stone was.”

He didn’t recall much about the early days of Milwaukee County Airport: “That seemed a long way off; farther than we wanted to walk. A real trip for us was a visit to New Coeln (along South Howell Avenue south of Layton Avenue) - there were two churches, a general store, about

two taverns and a few homes there. It was not big (enough to be considered a village); neither was St. Francis, really (at that time). They (New Coeln and St. Francis) were just names (of settlements), really; it was all part of Town of Lake, but St. Francis was definitely more of a village.”



The greenhouses of John Paulu, along KK Avenue south of Thompson (now Norwich) Avenue, were operated by Andy Koenig and his brother, Leo, beginning in the 1930s.

(Photo courtesy of Kathy Smith; Information courtesy Mary Becker)

Andy’s last recollection on this day was about barns: “There were a lot of barns (in the area) that weren’t used anymore, and a lot of them burned (in the 1920s) during Prohibition because a lot of stills were operated in them. Barn fires were so common due to having stills in them that (eventually) there weren’t many left after that - firefighters were really kept busy.”

The only other - and last - memory Andy imparted to me outside of that interview was at a SFHS general meeting a couple of years ago; it concerned the first Thompson School, which dated to the 1860s: “A lot of people keep telling me the school was once a church, because it was across from the Lake Protestant Cemetery, and because the bell tower resembled a church steeple. As far back as I can remember, and as far back as any of my family - father, grandfather, aunts, uncles - or anyone else I have ever known in my life can remember, and have told me so, that building was **never** any thing but a school.” Andy wanted to make that point very clear, and did - in a calm but convincing way. I am glad to have known Andy Koenig and to have had the opportunity to interview him. He was a great asset to St. Francis Historical Society and his family and community; he will be dearly missed by those of us fortunate enough to have befriended him.

PROJECTS IN PROGRESS

- Ron Tessmer reported he will be attending a meeting of the Committee of the Whole at St. Francis City Hall to garner information on when our society will be able to utilize the Frank Lupo home. Details will appear in our next newsletter.

BOARD MINUTES

- Ron and Marge Tessmer reported that a State Historical Society display, **“Women’s Work on the Farm,”** is scheduled to appear at **St. Francis Public Library** in **April**. It is planned to run for six to eight weeks. A committee is being appointed to coordinate the display.
- Ron also reported that a tour of the caretaker’s house on the St. John’s School for the Deaf grounds will be set up in the near future. Ownership of the home will transfer to the city on July 1st, and our society has an opportunity to utilize the facility after that.
- Bob Schwingle reports that notices of membership dues will be sent out soon.

“ST. FRANCIS/OLD TOWN OF LAKE AREA TRAILS”

by Chris Barney

“CULTURE ‘SHOCKED’:

What we’ve gained is not as much as what we’ve lost.”

(First of a series)

As a young boy growing up in the Town of Lake in the 1950s, one thing that always fascinated me was public transit. Living just a couple blocks from Wilson Park and the South 20th Street bus line, I would often venture over to 20th and Waterford to watch the Route 79 1100-series G.M. gas buses turn around and “lay-over” there at the southern end of the line; about one every half-hour or so. In between time, I might cross 20th Street to go ‘crabbing’ in the Wilson Park lagoon with my older brother, Dan. Other times would find me playing hardball with kids on the grassy area between Wilson Park Creek and the newly built apartment buildings along Van Beck Way; playing hide-and-seek among the huge, broken sections of industrial water pipe us-



The author (left), age 6, and his elder brother Dan, age 9, with their Wilson Park home in the background at right, circa 1957.

(Courtesy of Rosemary Barney)

ed as landfill for the yet-to-be-finished Olympic Bowling Alley, being built on what we kids called the “Farmer’s Field” (the old Splinter farmstead and pickle factory); or

walking along the abandoned right-of-way of the Lakeside Power Plant Electric Beltline Railway, which formed the southern border of the Wilson Park Veterans’ Housing Site - where our family lived from 1951 to 1959.

One of my favorite things to do when I wasn’t bus-watching was walking (yes, we did a **lot** of walking) over to Hopper’s IGA or Lenard’s Grocery Store on 20th and Howard for a fresh pack of baseball cards, hoping to get one of our favorite Milwaukee Braves - Eddie Mathews, Warren Spahn, Hank Aaron, Lew Burdette, Wes Covington - at that time, **any** card with a Milwaukee Brave on it was a prize possession to a young boy. And, a trip to Milwaukee County Stadium to see our heroes play - now that was a **real** prize!

In 1957 - before expressways had yet carved up the landscape; before suburban sprawl had begun to noticeably shrink the surrounding countryside; and **long** before morning and afternoon traffic gridlock and summer ozone alerts had an opportunity to rear their ugly heads, Milwaukee had one remaining urban electric streetcar line - the Route 10 Wells Street Car Line. However, its days were also



Looking east across the Wells Street trolley bridge, a westbound Route 10 car (center of photo) is partially obscured by trolley poles.



An eastbound Route 10 trolley car glides along adjacent to the Waukesha rapid transit tracks, on its way past Milwaukee County Stadium after passing underneath the 60th Street overpass in this 1950s photo.

(Both photos by Edwin Wilson from the collection of Larry Sakar)

numbered; by March of the following year it too was to pass out of existence, along with the numerous other streetcar and “interurban” electric lines which had gone before it. At one time, the “Milwaukee Electric Lines” had extended north to Sheboygan, west to Watertown, southwest to East Troy and Burlington, and south to Kenosha. Now, all that remained was the Wells Street Line and the Chicago-based

North Shore interurban line, also on the endangered list.

Being the last remaining electric trolley in Milwaukee, the Wells Street Car Line saw an increase in ridership during its last year of existence and, since it went by County Stadium on the way to its western terminus at 70th and Greenfield in West Allis, a Braves' game was a popular destination for a father wanting his son to experience a disappearing Milwaukee public transit tradition.

I was fortunate enough to be one of the thousands of kids to ride a Wells Street trolley that year. My memories of the experience are vague (I was 6½), but I do remember the gentle swaying and rocking of the car as it lumbered across the Miller Valley on the precarious-looking Wells Street trolley bridge. I also remember hanging onto the wicker seat in front of me as I looked out the side window during our trip across the half-mile span, quietly terrified that the streetcar was going to tip over and crash to the valley floor or Menomonee River below. Finally, I remember a sense of relief as I looked past the motorman out the front-center window and saw a welcoming cluster of trees (and solid ground) drawing ever closer. My fear was replaced, as I recall, by a sense of having accomplished an exciting adventure!!

The only other memory I have - probably during that same year - is standing on the northwest corner of 3rd and Wisconsin, with my Mom, waiting for a Route 19 trolley 'bus', and looking north toward Wells Street at just the right moment to spot an eastbound trolley crossing 3rd Street.



A southbound Route 79 bus crosses Wilson Park creek in 1958, near its southern terminus of 20th and Waterford. (City of Milwaukee)

That year, 1957, saw our Braves become Baseball Champions as our 'Bushville' team shocked the mighty New York Yankees in the World Series. As my father and I watched the parade of Braves go by the War Memorial at the lakefront during the victory celebration, nobody was thinking negatively - about the future of the Braves, the future of public transportation, growing traffic congestion, business exodus, 'white flight', urban decay, racial tension - or anything else, for that matter. In October 1957, in Milwaukee, all was right with the world - in reality, we were dreaming with our eyes open.

The following March, we lost our last streetcar; later, that fall, the Braves lost to the Yankees; by 1963, the North Shore interurban - our last electric railway - was lost to abandonment; by 1966 we would lose our beloved Braves to Atlanta; 1967 saw us lose our illusion of harmony to racial

rioting; by the end of the 1960's we have lost large chunks of our close-knit neighborhoods to expressway construction, much of which seemed to go nowhere; during the 1970's the loss of urban population to the suburbs and beyond saw the relocation of hundreds of large-scale businesses taking thousands of manufacturing jobs with them - the modern 'dream' was all too quickly becoming a nightmare. The recession of the early '80s put the finishing touches on a prolonged economic tailspin in the Milwaukee area. Municipalities in the county - and Milwaukee County itself - were forced to trim budgets and curtail certain services in order to hold off or keep tax increases to a minimum, due to the staggering loss of industrial tax base.

Ultimately, no one has been spared from the effects of this 'tragic' phenomenon and, even though some recent reports show Milwaukee making an economic comeback of sorts, many - and significant - problems remain. These include drug usage, teen pregnancy, domestic violence - including an alarming increase in homicides and armed robberies, child abuse, divorce, hunger and even the homelessness of intact families.



This 1959 aerial of Wilson Park Housing Site looks northeast and shows the abandoned right-of-way of the Lakeside Beltline electric railway angling across the lower right of the photo. (Courtesy of Annemarie Walinski)

Why has all this happened? Obviously, there is no single, clear-cut answer - but unemployment and loss of earning capacity have to rank high in a "top ten" list of reasons. Though Milwaukee's unemployment rate is lower than other large midwestern and eastern cities affected by the 'rust-belt recession', the ranks of the employed here include far too many service-oriented workers, where the combined earning capacity of a married couple does not come close to equalling that of one skilled industrial worker. The frustrations caused by this economic burden can, and very often do, lead to frustration, depression and ultimately desperation - resulting in many of the problems mentioned here being suffered by even the most sincere and well-meaning of families.

There has also been the threat of a return to the ugly and scarring "race wars" of the 1960's. At a time when blacks and whites and all races should be joining hands, names are

being called, accusations hurled and threats of violence are forming unnecessary barriers when all of us ought to be sitting down, sharing thoughts and ideas, and going out into the community to impress these positive, quality ideas upon both the public and private sectors - sensibly and peacefully.

Until unified cooperation can re-establish and rebuild a base of better-paying industrial jobs in Milwaukee's central urban areas, many of the vacancies that now exist for these jobs are in the outlying areas of Milwaukee County and beyond - inaccessible to the unemployed or lower-income service workers due to a lack of public transportation access. Many of these people have either an older, unreliable car or do not own a car at all and, even though these employers are willing to train workers unskilled in the trades involved, most potential employees simply cannot get to these jobs.

It is generally accepted that most welfare recipients would willingly give up public assistance if jobs were available to enable them to provide even the most modest standard of living. However welfare cuts due to income restrictions cause families to be worse off if both parents are working at minimum-wage jobs than if both were unemployed, thus reducing the incentive to work service-type jobs. Thus, a vicious cycle of frustration and apathy has been established, causing second and third-generations of families to be mired in a rut of hopelessness - where having babies is seen as a source of added income.

Many years ago, fear, ignorance and racial prejudice were definite and contributing-factors to the job discrimination which led to high minority unemployment. With the Civil Rights and Equal Employment Opportunity laws which were implemented in the 1960's and '70s this imbalance changed for the better, especially in the areas of civil and federal employment. The current lack of available, gainful and accessible employment can now be seen as more widespread, affecting all ethnic groups in varying degrees.

Studies have been done in recent years (many are listed in the Nov. '90 issue of Milwaukee magazine), and the single most agreed-upon cause of many of the problems mentioned here is the proliferation of the automobile. The explosion of car ownership beginning in the 1950's, followed by the resulting illogical suburban expansion, freeway and interstate highway construction and business flight that ultimately followed, led to many of the problems now faced by Metro Milwaukee. Too many people driving too many 'driver-only' cars; too many miles of multi-lane roads requiring too-frequent maintenance or replacement due to the ever-increasing traffic volume; too much freedom, too much complacency, too little concern, too little foresight and **far** too little common sense and cooperation are the things that have helped to bring about the greatest urban dilemma we have ever faced. And the problems aren't going to go away by themselves. It's going to take a concerted, conscious effort by each and every one of us to reverse these ever-worsening conditions - after all, each of us, in our own way, has contributed to these problems.

The best way to start is probably to take a look at

ourselves - our daily habits, to be specific. Are we recycling? Are we voluntarily separating our garbage? Does our community have a recycling program - if not, have we asked our elected officials why not? Do we carpool? If not, have we asked our fellow workers to start one? Does a carpool already exist that we can become a part of? Is there public transportation nearby? Do we use it often, or even occasionally? Do we walk to nearby destinations, like the bank, grocery store, pharmacy or movie theater? (Oooh, it so **good** for us!!) Do we use items that make good ecological and environmental sense, like re-usable instead of throwaway convenience items, or pump bottles instead of aerosol sprays?

I'll bet the answer to a lot of these questions is no, or "I used to, but not anymore." I know it is for me. Well, Milwaukee, it's time for us to wake up. Just think about it -that's right, turn off the TV, VCR, stereo and headphones, and **really think** about the dire straits we're in right now - the even worse ones we - and our children and theirs - will be in, not that long from now, if we don't change our ways. The exciting part is that we can help make things better right now, for us and our children. And we can teach them habits they can pass along to their children. Much of what we can do can be turned into "family projects" - and what we recycle can be turned into useful products, the way I believe God intended it, instead of mountains upon mountains of useless, decaying garbage tainting countless square miles of earth, rendering it useless. And, who knows, these projects could bring families closer together; get parents involved with their children and vice-versa, and who knows what benefits that might reap!! And, with church attendance by young families on the increase (according to Newsweek), the attitudes of whole communities will begin to change, bad influences will decrease, and . . .

Hey, let's not kid ourselves - the problems we have will not disappear overnight. But they won't disappear at all unless we do all we can to **help** them go away, and urge our business and civic leaders to do the same, through legislation submitted by our local, state and national leaders. A project is already underway to create a network of light-rail electric interurban routes, much like the ones that existed here from 1897 to 1963 - but the actual implementation of such a system will take several years to complete. The sad thing, noted a UWM professor in the Milwaukee magazine article, is that "we had it (a functioning local trolley and interurban system) here and we threw it away." He also noted in the article that the spread-out development of outlying areas coupled with the building of the interstate highways reduced our centers of population density, thereby making it difficult to justify a subsidy (grant) for a light rail system (for the Metro Milwaukee area). However, studies are continuing, and have the support of many business and civic leaders, so light-rail in some form here seems very likely. In addition, Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS) has a new 'Northwest Express' bus system being readied for implementation - it's scheduled to start sometime in 1992 - and is also planning to build a major urban bus transportation center sometime in the future. However, the bottom line is participation - until these new systems are in place, we need

to utilize the public mass transportation we currently have; carpooling, bus, and conventional rail systems - to start the 'reversal of fortunes' right away. An added incentive in the near future may include an increase in urban parking fees, to discourage auto usage and increase mass transit ridership.

Mass transit, in addition to other sound environmental practices, can only reap benefits for all of us in Metro Milwaukee - let's help make it work. As for me, I'm going to start saving aluminum cans again. And, even though it's a half-mile walk to the nearest bus line, I'm going to use it more often. A trip to Chicago? I'm taking **Amtrak** - they run several 'Hiawatha' commuter trains there daily. And, I can't wait until I can ride a local electric trolley car to the ball park again; I don't care if I'm 50 or 60 by that time, I know I'll feel like that 6½-year-old boy again: awed, yet exhilarated. Our wild and crazy love affair with the automobile has turned sour - I, for one, say it's time to wake up - and break up.

— Christopher N. Barney - Old Town of Lake Historian/
St. Francis Historical Society — December 18, 1990

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

I believe it was Charles Dickens who wrote: "It was the best of times; it was the worst of times." That saying is clearly true for our society over the past half-year.

From the euphoria of the possibility of two ongoing meeting, display and storage facilities for our society to the shattering and heartbreaking reality of the recent loss of two of our founding members, **Andy Koenig** and **Kathy Schwingle**, the gamut of our emotions have surely been run.

While we grieve deeply, we cannot forget the lasting contributions these charter society members made during their lifetimes, and we must not allow their goals to remain unfulfilled.

I worked on many projects with Kathy Schwingle myself, and she was, many times, an inspiration to me when I was frustrated or tired during a project. I will continue to carry her inspiration with me in whatever I do.

HISTORY AROUND US

- **Founder's Day** and a national conference on heritage tourism - the growing segment of the tourist industry based on history - coincide this year at Milwaukee's **Wyndham Center** on Friday and Saturday, **February 15 and 16**. A block of rooms is being held at the Wyndham for this conference. Hotel phone numbers are **276-8686** locally and **1-800-822-4200** elsewhere. Rates are **\$55-65**. Conference workshops include hospitality training, merchandising in museums and shops, grassroots fund raising and community appearance. Information on conference registration and other fees is available by calling **(608) 262-8000**. This event is sponsored by the **State Historical Society of Wisconsin**, the **National Trust for Historic Preservation**, the **Wisconsin tourism office**, the **Wisconsin Trust for the Historic Preservation**, and the **Wisconsin Council for Local History**.
- Three all-day workshops will be held in **Waukesha** on **March 2**, **Barron** on **March 16** and **Stevens Point** on **April 6**, sponsored by **SHS of Wisconsin**. These **Local History Workshops** will be on "**World War II and You: Researching and Writing Local History and Memoirs**", "**Designing Newsletters, Brochures and Posters**", and "**Conserving Paper Records**". SHSW staff will conduct the workshops, which are open to the general public. Registration is \$6, and information is available by calling **(608) 262-8000**.

SFHS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

- I wish to play an active role in developing the St. Francis Historical Society.
- I would like to donate material to the Society.
- I would like to serve on the Board of Directors and/or committee chairman.

ANNUAL DUES

- Individual\$ 4.00 Life\$100.00
- Family 5.00 Corporate 100.00
- Sustaining 15.00

Return to: Ronald Tessmer, 2517 E. Norwich Avenue, St. Francis, WI 53207.

1991 DATES TO REMEMBER

- January 28th** Annual Membership Meeting
6:00 p.m., St. Francis Community Center
Potluck Supper and Program,
"Santa: In Life and Legend"
- February 6, March 6, April 3** Board Meetings
6:30 p.m., Thompson School
- April 29th** General Membership Meeting
Time, place and program to be announced.

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

