

ST. FRANCIS HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

PUBLISHED BIMONTHLY

May 2010 Issue

The following is taken from a report written by Kim Cummings entitled "St. Francis Street Names and Their History" (continued).

Elijah Estes, his wife Zebiah Wentworth Estes, and three of their children are buried in Thompson Cemetery (Lake Protestant Cemetery). The origin of the family, in a sense, is the origin of St. Francis. The story is told by Daisy Estes Tucker, a great-granddaughter of Estes, in the book, "So You Will Know" which was compiled by Erwin F. Zillman, a Bay View civic leader.

"Elijah Estes was born January 30, 1814 in Morgantown, North Carolina. By the time he had reached the age of 20, he had decided to leave his father's prosperous plantation. A handsome, strong-willed lad with the curly black hair and blue eyes of his Irish ancestors, Elijah abhorred slavery and wanted to seek his fortune in the North. There the soil was rich and the people were free. There hearty men worked their own land. With his belongings packed in a hair trunk strapped to his shoulders, he left Morgantown in the spring of 1834. Now and then he got a lift from a prairie schooner, but he covered most of the 2,000 miles to Chicago on his own. When he finally reached Fort Dearborn, in what was called "Village of Chicago", he had to spend his last cent. His feet were swollen and bleeding and he was forced to remain there to earn money for supplies.

People he had met on the way had described the rolling green countryside of the bordering state of Wisconsin and Elijah knew that the end of his journey was near. While he was in Fort Dearborn, something unexpected happened. Elijah fell in love. She was dark-haired, brown-eyed Zebiah Wentworth, whose father ran the hotel in the village where Elijah was staying. She was the cousin of Long John Wentworth who later became mayor of Chicago. Before long they were betrothed, and Zebiah shared in all of Elijah's dreams for the future.

Early one March morning in 1835, Elijah said goodbye to his beloved, promising that as soon as he staked his claim, he would build a cabin, and then return for her. It took him three days to walk to Milwaukee. He arrived at the mouth of the Milwaukee River weary and discouraged. The Indians had crept into his camp one night and had stolen all of his precious supplies and money. He knocked at the door of the first house he came to and was warmly welcomed by Doctor Enoch Chase. Dr. Chase urged Elijah to stay with him until he could borrow money."

(To Be Continued...)

A letter from the St. Francis Historical Society President....

Dear Members and Friends,

We have been quite active as a society this year and I thought you might be interested in what has been keeping us busy.

We kicked off this year with our First Annual Heirloom Seed Sale in March with presentations at the St. Francis Library on "Heirloom Garden Planning and Seed Starting" and "Home Gardening Tips". Carol and Dennis Wojtecki have coordinated this wonderful fund raiser which has been quite successful. The sale of garden seeds continues until the end of May. Seeds are still available. Call Carol & Dennis at 483-4698 or Mary & Bill at 481-6511 to purchase some.

Last minute details are being worked out before we can finalize arrangements with the St. Francis School District for our long term temporary move to Deer Creek School. We are planning our move out of the Lupo House and into Deer Creek School for August.

Revision of the proposed building plans for our new historical society facility continues. As it stands today, the facility consists of 1500 square feet of multi-purpose meeting /display space, and 500 square feet of collection storage space. Final cost estimates are being worked up. Fund raising efforts to build and maintain our new facility are in the initial discussion phase.

All of this work is currently being done by a small but very active group of dedicated board members. We would love to have more members involved. (Yes, I'm calling for volunteers!) In particular we need help in communications, fund raising and special events. Please let us know if you are interested, or join us at an upcoming monthly meeting. We meet on the 3rd Saturday of the month at the St. Francis Library, lower level, 10:00-noon.

Thanks for your continued support. Your dues and donations are appreciated.

Best wishes,

Bill Drehfal, President
St. Francis Historical Society
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