



# St. Francis HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## NOJOSHING

Indian word for "straight tongue"

Land protrudes out into Lake Michigan like a straight tongue

### The Newsletter of the St. Francis Historical Society

published quarterly  
Non-Profit Organization 501c3

## December 2017

### Christmas Memories

#### Lots of good memories

My Christmas memories are a mishmash. We went to my grandma's house for Christmas dinner and the 'grown-ups' sat at the dining room table and the kids at the kitchen table. I don't remember her ever having a Christmas tree, but she had a Christmas village that she set up on a table in the living room. I remember once when I woke up in the middle of the night (probably about 10:00 or 11:00) and peeked and saw the tree and promptly woke up my brother because Santa had been there. I must have been about 7 or 8 - kids believed longer then. To the day she died my mother put her tree up on December 24th, not a day sooner. Then there was the time my husband and I were trying to assemble a gift for one of the kids and there must have been a storm because the electricity kept going out. Instead of taking a half hour it took about two and a half hours. Lots of good memories.

**Barbara Janiszewski**

#### Worst Christmas Ever

I was probably about 12 or 13 years old and I thought I was going to get a head start on Christmas. I was babysitting for my siblings, and after they went to sleep I decided to see what I was going to get for Christmas. I carefully



unwrapped every one of my gifts from my parents. I was happy because most of them were things I had asked for. I carefully repackaged them. The problem was when Christmas came and it was time to open my gifts, there was no excitement or Christmas magic. Needless to say it was the worst Christmas I ever had, and I never did it again. Lesson learned!

**Sue Zuehlke**

#### Santa's Big Night

It was 25 years ago when I was dating my wife Susan (my fiancée at the time), our first Christmas approaching. Her parents asked me if I would portray Santa Claus at their home on Christmas Eve. I would be required to wear the family's old, traditional worn-out Santa costume. At first I was reluctant to do so as I had never dressed up as Santa and wasn't sure I could pull it off to fool the family's niece, Katie. Susan eventually wore me down, and I finally agreed to perform this task that I would end up doing for the next several years.

Christmas Eve comes and the evening's agenda is set up to have a big dinner first and then Santa's exciting visit later. During the activity of cleaning up, Susan and I would break away from the family, and she would help get me dressed in my in-law's bedroom. Katie would be entertained at the far end of the house. My brother-in-law Jerry would act as a lookout to guard the bedroom door from small, prying eyes.

*Little did I know that there would be some problems!!!*

**Problem #1** -My in-laws had a small bathroom connected to their bedroom. It came with a very narrow bathroom door. Originally I thought that it made good

sense to dress in there. When I was done and I was ready to depart, it happened. I couldn't make my grand entrance because I got stuck in the narrow doorway. Apparently the pillow used for my suit was too big and no matter how hard I tried, I could not move. I was really trapped. The first thought I had was - how do I explain this to a 4 year old? (Santa used to use chimneys but now prefers to use bathrooms?) Even a 4-year-old would never buy that excuse. Susan came to my rescue by pulling and pushing me. She took a couple of steps back and then came rushing at me, and that force helped push me back into the bathroom. I retrieved the pillow from under the suit and returned to the bedroom.

**Problem #2** - When I returned the pillow to its place under the suit, I was ready for Santa's boots. The suit came with an old pair of my father-in-law's galoshes that were just a bit too small for my feet. It was very difficult to put them on with that darn pillow again. So once more the pillow was removed from under the suit to provide me with the ability to put the galoshes on. I tried and tried but my feet did not fit into those boots. Once again my Susan came to my rescue. We both struggled and spent some time trying to fit the boots over my shoes. She suggested that she would yank, and I would kick, and then my shoes would slide into the boots. When we did this she lost her grip, and I accidentally kicked her, which sent her reeling across the bedroom, where she fell against her parent's bedroom bureau. Jerry tapped on the door and stuck his head in and asked what was holding us up. We explained to him about our boot difficulties. He replied by asking if we had to wear the shoes under the boots. I recall looking at Susan and her looking at me. We both stared at each other for a few seconds and slightly shook our heads in disbelief. Why didn't we think of that! With that problem solved, I was finally dressed. I sneaked out of the house only to return a few minutes later as Santa and the exciting visit started. With all the work it took to get dressed up as Santa Claus, I believed it was well worth it. That Christmas turned out to be an enjoyable family evening for all!

Jay Wesner



## **What's New?**

### **Membership**

Welcome to returning member Kurt Koenig.

### **Bake Sale**

We ran out of baked goods again at our bake sale as part of the Harvest and Heritage Fest on October 1st. A thank you to all who donated bakery and helped that day!

### **September Event**

Our event in September was very successful. Anna Passante gave an interesting presentation when she appeared at Cordelia Packard Sacia. We had a good crowd. Anna was also debuting her new book, Part 2 of the history of the city of St. Francis.

### **Christmas Dinner and Program**

We will be having our annual Christmas dinner at Polonez restaurant on December 7th. Cocktails at 5:30 and dinner at 6:00. Come join us for a family style dinner with both Polish and American cuisine. Anna Passante will be portraying Caroline Donsing, a nurse during the World War I, also known as the Great War.

### **Display cabinet in rotunda**

Come see the new displays in the civic center rotunda. The military quilt was done by Debbie Kober and celebrates the military career of her family members. The opposite side is for Bert Maudie, the late husband of Carol Maudie who served in the Korean War.

### **Election of Board Members**

At our January 20, 2018, Annual Meeting, we will be electing a new board member and officers. The candidate for the open board seat is Nancy Goltz. Nominations will also be taken from the floor.

### **Passing of Richard Raatz**

Spelling correction: Raatz

### **City Christmas Parade**

The St. Francis Christmas Parade will take place on Saturday, Dec 2, at 4:00. The parade route begins at Vretenar Park (4230 S. Kirkwood Ave.) and will end at the Civic Center at 3400 E Howard Ave. Free treats, entertainment, and visit from Santa after the parade!



**ST. FRANCIS HISTORICAL SOCIETY**  
**Cordially Invites You to Our**

# **ANNUAL HOLIDAY DINNER**



Come hear Caroline Donsing (reenacted by Anna Passante) relate her experiences as a U.S. Army nurse during World War I at the Western Front in France. Caroline will take you back in time to a hospital field station, so close to the trenches that the medical staff could hear the sounds of the artillery.



**Thursday, December 7**  
**Cocktails 5:30-6:00 p.m.**  
**Dinner at 6:00 p.m.**

**\$25 per person, Polish & American menu served family style.**

**Polonez Restaurant 4016 S. Packard Ave.**  
**St. Francis, Wisconsin 53235**

***Please R.S.V.P. by December 2nd to***  
***Barbara Janiszewski, 414-744-6813, 4007 S. Lipton Ave. St. Francis 53235***



# Photos of Past Events



## St. Francis Days

Top: Barbara Janiszewski in the passenger side seat is ready to throw the candy

Center; Bill Drehfal with his grandsons William and Dillon, Anna Passante, and Jennifer Mertz.

Bottom: Bill Drehfal, Dillon Drehfal, and Anna Passante



Have you ever wondered how you could make a significant difference in the future of the St. Francis Historical Society? One way is to make a bequest to the historical society in your will.

St. Francis Historical Society is dedicated to preserving the history and the stories of St. Francis and Town of Lake for the future generations. Remembering the historical society in your will can help assure a strong future.

A specific amount, a percentage of your estate, or all or part of what remains after other bequests are distributed can be bequeathed to the Society. Your attorney or other qualified estate planner can help you with this bequest.

Any amount is important to the Society's future. For further information, please contact us at 414-316-4391.

## In Memoriam

Lois Neubauer, one of the founders of the St. Francis Historical Society in 1977, died November 22, 2017. Lois served as president of the Society in 1978 and continued to serve as an officer for many years. She also served as an honorary Society board member.

## Anton "Anthony" Spalthoff: Concrete Stonecarver

Stone carving is the earliest known example of representational art. It is a type of sculpting where pieces of rough natural stone are shaped by the careful removal of bits of the stone. With the use of a chisel or other tools the sculptor changes the stone from a rough block into a finished piece of art. Another medium used to create stone sculptures is concrete. The late Milwaukeean Anthony Spalthoff was a sculptor who used concrete to create numerous intricately sculptured concrete pieces for St. John's School for the Deaf located in St. Francis, Wisconsin, at 3680 South Kinnickinnic Avenue. His artwork at St. John's campus earned him a memorial plaque displayed on a wall of the school building.

Spalthoff was born in Muenster, Germany, in 1869. His father Johann was an artist, and it was in Johann's studio that ten-year-old Anthony used a chisel for the first time. Johann was a carpenter, creating fine ornamental work for churches. At age sixteen, Anthony attended the University of Munich on scholarship, which he won in an art competition.

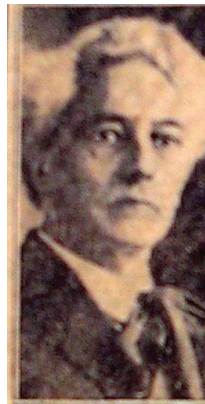
Anthony's father Johann traveled to Saginaw, Michigan, to visit his son Joseph and daughter Antoinette in 1893. During his visit, Johann died of pneumonia. The following year, Anthony immigrated to America with his mother, Ludovica Josephine, arriving in Michigan. Anthony lived in Michigan for about ten years and created sculptures for churches. His brothers Frank and Joseph moved to Milwaukee. Anthony, his mother, and sister Antoinette followed soon after in about 1901.

Spalthoff's work at St. John's School for the Deaf probably began shortly after a new deaf school building was completed in 1907, after a fire had devastated the first school building. He worked with Father Gerend to beautify the buildings and the school grounds. His work in the school chapel included a stained glass window, plaster casts of the Stations of the Cross, and other works in the sanctuary. But the majority of his work was on the school grounds---charming concrete whimsical figures and mural friezes.



Above: Anthony Spalthoff as a young man

Below: Anthony left and his brother Felix on right



Above: Spalthoff in later years

Left: gnome

Right: lion



To make these concrete sculptures, Spalthoof had to work quickly on blocks of formed concrete before the concrete was completely dry. He carved out his own design using sculpting tools. He began at the top of the sculpture and carved his way down working quickly in order to finish the carving within one hour of pouring of the wet cement. The concrete dried within twenty-four hours and was left to cure for seven days. A number of the St. John's sculptures are pictured here.

Spalthoff's "bread and butter" was his work as a subcontractor. His work includes plaster ornamentation at Milwaukee's Oriental Theater, and he may have done plasterwork at the Pabst Theater as well. Spalthoff carved from Bedford stone a group of statuary for the Holy Name Church Cemetery in Sheboygan. The *Sheboygan Press* described the statues as unusual in "the pose of the figures and beauty of the faces." The figures included St. Mary, St. John, Mary Magdalene, and Christ on the cross. Anthony also sculpted a group of pre-historic animals for the Brooklyn Museum in New York, as well as mural friezes for St. Joseph Parish in Lyons, Wisconsin.

Spalthoof's most important work was in 1931, when he created a civil war memorial for the city of Weyauwega, Wisconsin. Weyauwega resident George W. Taggart Jr. donated the monument to the city in honor of the 1st Wisconsin Volunteer Cavalry in which Taggart served. The statue is of a soldier standing next to his horse. The *Appleton Post Crescent* reported that sculptor Anthony Spalthoff poured "the life into the eyes, the



Above: Front archway of St. John's with knight on a horse at the left of the archway.

Right: Young deaf students pose in front of monks sculpture with a bell

Bottom right: Girl with ducks

Below: Sculpture entitled *Two Smiling Elves*



nostrils of the Morgan horse, fully equipped for war, which holds its head high, with ears pricked up and the shy but courageous cavalryman by his side, standing at attention."

Spalthoof never married and lived with his sister, Antoinette. He died August 24, 1933, of a heart attack at his home at 2026 West Hadley Street in Milwaukee. He had been working on a small bust sculpture of President Franklin Roosevelt. His obituary claimed the bust would never be completed. The bust now resides at the Roosevelt University in Chicago.

In the late 1960s, when the old 1907 school building and out buildings were being razed, a nearby resident, Florence Jucha, asked one of the teaching sisters at the school, Sister Claude, if she could have the stork sculpture that was perched on the top of the garage. Sister Claude said "You and a hundred other people want it." Unfortunately, the stork fell apart when the garage was razed, so Jucha and a hundred other people felt a sense of dismay. Hopefully some pieces may have survived. If you know of someone who has artifacts from the building, please contact the historical society at 316-4391. We would like to photograph them.



**Top:** Grotto sculpture entitled *The Flight to Egypt*

**Left:** Holy Name Cemetery sculptures

**Below:** An elf climbs the side of the caretakers cottage on the St. John's School grounds

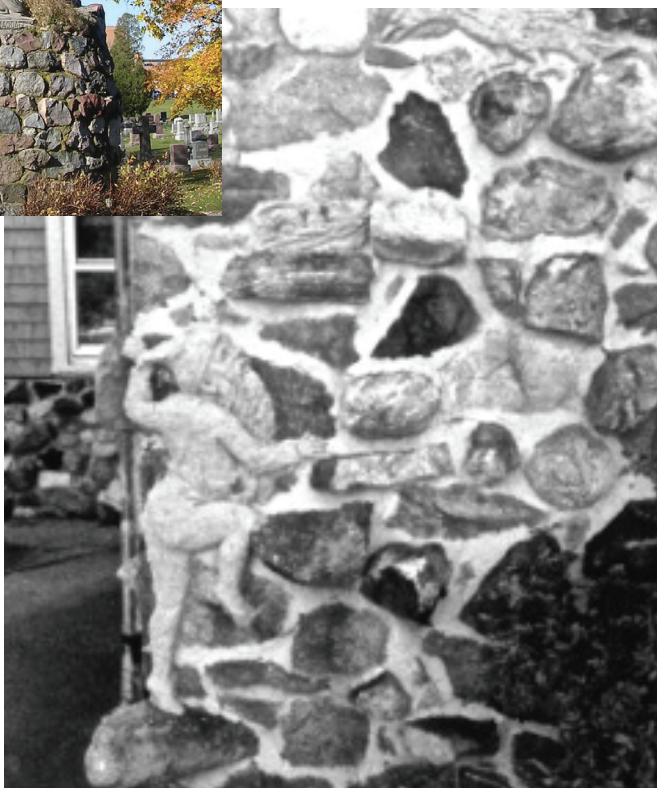


**Top:** The civil war monument at Weyauwega, Wisconsin



Roosevelt University Archives

**Bust of President Franklin Roosevelt**





St. Francis Historical Society  
3400 E. Howard Ave.  
St. Francis, WI 53235

## 2016 Officers

President..... Anna Passante  
Vice-President..... Sister Ceil Struck  
Secretary.....Stephanie Maxwell  
Treasurer.....Barbara Janiszewski

## Board of Directors

Randy Borland  
Jan Pientok  
Jennifer Mertz  
Jay Wesner  
Mary Drehfal

## Honorary

Jim Goodwin  
Ralph Voltner  
Bill Drehfal  
Maggie Luczywko  
Lois Neubauer  
Kathy Matthew  
Terry Duffey  
Carol Wojtecki

## Newsletter

Anna Passante  
Barbara Janiszewski

## Mark Your Calendar

### Board Meetings

December 16, 9:30 a.m.  
January 20, 2018, 9:30 a.m Annual Meeting  
February 17, 2018, 9:30 a.m.

### Events

December 7, 5:30 pm, Christmas dinner Polonez

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**Website:** stfranciswihistoricalsociety.org

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