

St. Francis

HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NOJOSHING

Indian word for "straight tongue"

land protrudes out into Lake Michigan like a straight tongue

Newsletter published quarterly

Non-Profit Organization 501c3

June 2018

A Happy Past Fourth of July

By Karen Gersonde

April was an awful month. I was waiting for Spring. I really was. I was hoping that the warm weather would come, but it did not. After all, this is Wisconsin. So when the snow fell, and it did, I thought what a good time to stay in the house and go through some old photos that I had sitting on my desk but never got around to viewing. So I opened the old yellow envelope that my dearly departed mother had stored all of our old photos in, and dove back into my past. I was a little anxious as to what I would find.



It didn't take long before I came upon these treasured photos, Fourth of July in St. Francis, 1967. I knew these photos had existed but I had not seen them in a very long time. Yet they were exactly as I had remembered them, and the memories of that day came back to me in all its glory.

The Fourth of July was always a very special time for me growing up in St. Francis. The warm days, cool lake breezes, playing with fireworks and sparklers at night, which mother never approved of, but dad always bought for us. Catching lightning bugs at night, outdoor cookouts, and ice cream were all part of it. But the highlight of the Fourth was the big City of St. Francis Fourth of July parade.

I think it was the second biggest event of the year. I say that because St. Francis Days in September was always number one. Anyway, back then, the parade started at S. Kinnickinnic Ave. and E. St. Francis Ave. by Sacred Heart School. It then proceeded south

down S. KK Ave. to E. Lunham Ave, where it proceeded east down Lunham Ave. to Greene Park. Greene Park is where all of the festivities of the day would occur. If I recall, there was a talent contest, music, free ice cream, and the judging of the decorated bicycles. Everyone in the city turned out for this event. It was the place to be with family and friends.

What was special about this parade is that as a child, you were able to decorate your bicycle, tricycle, wagon, or doll buggy for the Fourth of July, and you were then judged and were able to win prizes. There was always a theme to follow, if I remember correctly. Every year it was different. The prizes were always really good toys they would award you. Back then, getting a free toy was a big deal, as we did not have a lot of toys growing up. So out came the crepe paper, your best crayons, markers, balloons, flags, or any other decoration you could think of and hence, you decorated your bike. You then got to ride your decorated bike in the parade, which was a very big deal to us as kids. It was a long way to ride, and you got to ride in the street and show off your achievements to all who lined the parade route. Our parents did not accompany us; they sat on the parade route with their webbed folding chairs, along with the neighbors, and watched and waved as we went by. The parade route was always filled with two or three



people deep watching the parade. I think we were as proud as peacocks to be in that parade. I remember this all so vividly. Oh the joy and fun we had!

On this particular Fourth of July, I rode in the parade with my best girlfriend and neighbor, Mary Bucci (now Billo.) We helped each other decorate our bikes the day before. Once decorated, we didn't dare ride them until parade time. We didn't want anything to fall off. The day was a bit cool, as we had light jackets on, but that was normal for living near the lake. We rode the parade route without a hitch, and our bikes were finally judged at Greene Park. I won first place and received a toy guitar, which I thought was really cool, and Mary won second place and received a Twister game. We played with those toys a lot! Note the banana seat bike that I had at that time. My dad took an old bicycle and converted it into a banana seat bike for me and my brother to ride. Wish I still had that bike!

So now you know what the Fourth of July was like back in 1967 in the City of St. Francis, when I was 11 years old and Mary

was 9 years old. They were good times for sure and great memories that will last a lifetime. And yes, Mary and I are still best friends. Best friends forever!



Have you ever wondered how you could make a significant difference in the future of the city of St. Francis? One way is to include a gift to the St. Francis Historical Society in your will, trust or beneficiary designation. For more information, please contact Anna Passante at 414-316-4391 or st.francishistoricalsociety@gmail.com.

What's New?

New Member

Welcome new member Kathy Masch

Bake Sale

The bake sale held on election day, April 3rd was very successful! A big thank you to all who donated. A special thanks to Jennifer Mertz and Nancy Goltz for contacting members and asking for those donations.

May Program

Steve Person, a retired funeral director gave a very informative and interesting talk, complete with props, about Victorian funeral practices. There was a very good turnout for the program--62 participants.

Display cabinet in rotunda

Come see the new display in the civic center rotunda. The moveable display cabinet has photographs of the Lakeside Power Plant.



Lakeside Power Plant

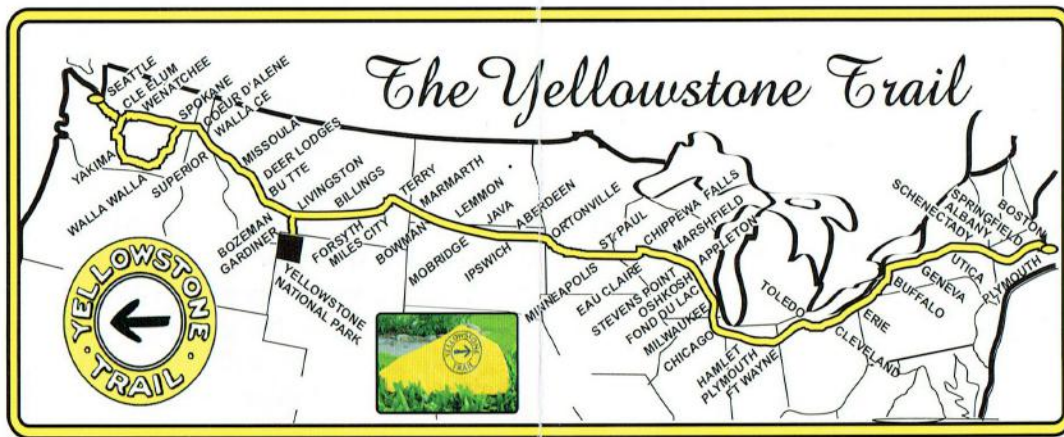
The dedication of a Wisconsin state historical marker at the site of the former Lakeside Power Plant at Lake Drive and Howard Avenue will take place on August 4 at 2:00 pm. Come early for an ice cream social at 1:00 at the La Finca Coffee Shop at 3558 E. Sivyer Avenue (corner of Packard and Sivyer avenues).

Regional Meeting:

The St. Francis Historical Society will be hosting the 2018 Wisconsin Council for Local History Meeting on Saturday, July 7 at the civic center. Speakers are Mark Maurice of the Greater Milwaukee Foundation, Randy Borland speaking about the ground penetrating radar performed at the Lake Protestant Cemetery, and Bill Drehfal speaking about the historical displays in the civic center rotunda. After a box lunch there will be tours of the Lake Protestant Cemetery, the seminary woods and cemetery, and the St. Francis of Assisi Convent Chapel.

Get your copies!!

There are still copies available of Anna Passante's two books on the history of Wisconsin: *From Nojoshing to St. Francis From Settlement to City. Early History of St. Francis, Wisconsin. Part 1* (\$15) includes the history of the seminary, convent, orphanage, school for the deaf, Sacred Heart, etc. *Part 2* (\$20) is about the early settlers from 1836-1900. Postage is \$4 or the books are available through the historical society office at the civic center. Also available on Amazon.com and Boswell Books on Downer Avenue in Milwaukee.



Yellowstone Trail

by Anna Passante

Have you noticed the Yellowstone Trail signs on Lake Drive, Packard, and Howard avenues? Do you wonder what the Yellowstone Trail is all about?

Steve Schreiter of the South Milwaukee Historical Society gave a presentation at the St. Francis Historical Society's April meeting. It was well received for those who attended.



A brochure put out by the Yellowstone Trail Association says the following about the history of the trail:

Begun in 1912, the Yellowstone Trail was the first transcontinental auto routed through the northern tier states. Before that time there were no connected long-distance roads. The existing local roads were mostly just dirt and routes had no numbers.

Government ignored the situation and promoted railroads. So people joined together in private "trail" groups like the Yellowstone Trail Association to get better roads. They pressured counties into connecting with the next county's roads and thus succeeded in creating this historic coast-to-coast route.

The Association charged membership dues, handed out maps and newsletters, held fun "Trail Days" where everyone helped patch the Trail, held auto races, and guided tourists. Towns competed to get on the Trail.

By 1927, most routes had numbers, gasoline company maps were free, and tax dollars built the roads. Then the Great Depression arrived. The route colors, the boosters, and the trail associations disappeared by 1930.



Here is the route that the Yellowstone Trail takes through St. Francis:

The route travels north from Chicago through Kenosha and Racine Counties and enters Oak Creek on Hwy 32 (Chicago Road). It follows Chicago Road through South Milwaukee and Cudahy. At the intersection of College and Packard roads, the earlier Yellowstone route went east on College Avenue to Lake Drive. It traveled north on Lake Drive, connecting with Superior Street in Bay View to Conway Street and turned west on Conway, and then made its way north through Milwaukee. (Today, Conway Street doesn't go through due to the Hwy 794.)

Later, the trail didn't take the Lake Drive route. Instead, at the intersection of College and Packard Avenues, the trail ran north on Packard Avenue to Howard Avenue, which at that time was

also known as Thompson Road. Since Howard Avenue didn't go through (it was put through in the 1990s), the trail veered at Lipton Avenue and connected with Thompson/Norwich avenues and traveled east to Kinnickinnic Avenue. From

there, the trail traveled north through the city of Milwaukee.

What are some landmarks that would have been on the Yellowstone Trail Route in St. Francis?



Reinert House 3623 E. Howard Ave. built 1870s



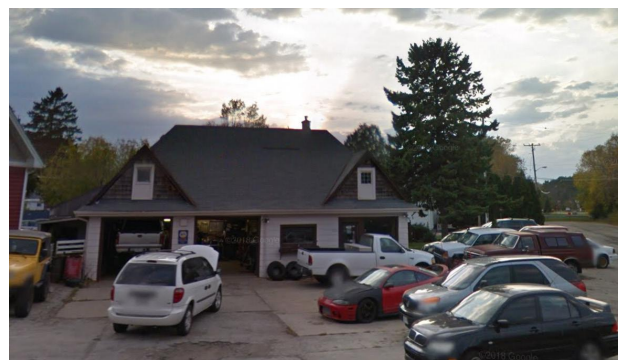
Lakeside Power Plant Howard /Lake Drive built 1921



The old Thompson School built in 1888/1917
see 1946 town of lake directory for address



Right Trac Inn
3724 S. Kinnickinnic Avenue built in 1860s



Dan's Auto Repair 3901 S. Lake Drive
Built in 1927 and perhaps sold gas and performed repairs for those traveling the Yellowstone Trail.

THE SEMINARY WOODS

By Mark Hansen

The beautiful grounds of St. Francis, with its many institutions, (the like of which cannot be found anywhere in the country) did not come about by mere chance. It was the result, no doubt, of careful planning on the part of Bishop Henni. In 1849, he advised a little band of Catholic missionaries from Bavaria to relocate in Nojoshing Woods — four miles south of Milwaukee. It must have come to him as by intuition on that memorable day, when perhaps for the first time, he looked upon that beautiful landscape. It seems reasonable that he did not only think of a convent of the religious community that would soon arise, but of a seminary and other Catholic institutions as well, which in the course of years might be erected there.

The St. Francis Seminary grounds in those early days were called Nojoshing Woods. These woods were the Indians' paradise, and it was the Deer Creek clan of the Potawatomie that gave the creek flowing through the seminary its name, Deer Creek. All the territory south of Milwaukee was one dense forest, and there wasn't a nicer spot in all the State of Wisconsin. Looking south from the village of Milwaukee, St. Francis, as it is now called, appeared to be a "point extending out into the water," which the Indians named Nojoshing. Later on when the seminary was built and placed under the protection of its namesake, St. Francis de Sales, a post-office was necessary. St. Francis Post Office was the name given by the United States government. Ever since this locality has been known by that Christian name, St. Francis.

The natural beauty of these grounds in the early days---the rolling surface, the beautiful groves

of maple, elm, and beech, the ravines and gullies worn by rippling streams as they wended along their beds to find rest among the waters of Lake Michigan---formed a landscape which pleased the eye and gladdened the heart of nature's severest critic. This was especially the case in the summer or early autumn when seen from a proper place of vantage.

As we survey this environment today, the mind instinctively turns to the past to ask if the hand of man, in working the changes wrought for civilization, has disturbed the repose of nature. The answer must be, "Yes to some extent." Though much of the beauty remains, much has disappeared in the course of years, especially farm buildings and fields of grain and hay. Gone too are the sleek cattle and horses grazing on the hillside, which showed that the labor of thrifty farmers received its reward.

We must remember that considerable material went into the construction of that first main building of the seminary. There were no brickyards of sufficient capacity near enough to supply the brick. Reverend Francis X. Paulhuber, who assisted Father Michael Heiss and Dr. Joseph Salzmänn in the first years as plans were beginning developed, went to Nojoshing to begin the work in earnest. Paulhuber engaged the Tertiaries Brothers, the missionaries who had arrived in 1849, to help construct the seminary. They cleared a tract of land northeast of the building site, which contained the proper clay soil for making bricks, and the kilns were built on the premises. A tract of timberland was purchased in present-day Cudahy, and the timber was harvested to feed the kiln fires. And then they made bricks and bricks — there was no end to it.



ST. FRANCIS DE SALES SEMINARY AND DEER CREEK AS SEEN FROM THE ORPHAN ASYLUM IN 1878

After this part of the preliminaries was well under way, Paulhuber went to Sheboygan, Wisconsin, to buy the necessary lumber to build the seminary. There were no large lumberyards in Milwaukee then, and lumber was generally bought directly from the sawmills, or lumber camps, of which there were many in those days. And soon quite a showing was made — the walls of the Salesianum rose higher and higher until the time for laying the cornerstone that took place on July 15, 1855. Thus, in the exploitation of raw materials accounted for, the Seminary Woods appeared destined to be left intact.

A LITTLE CREEK THAT WAS

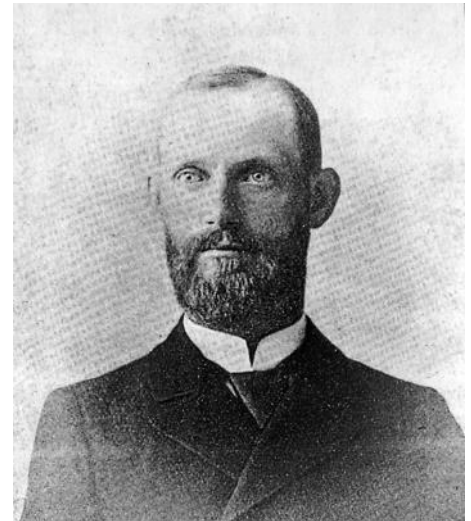
Deer Creek is fed by a spring, its source near Kinnickinnic and Norwich avenues. It meanders gracefully eastward through the Seminary Woods in a hollow to a fall line. Below, the valley begins in a gentle bend towards the north. It is likely that the high-water table discouraged any effort for clearing work in this area. Deer Creek was quite a stream before modern civilization crept in with its improvements and conveniences. Underneath the seminary drive over the valley there is a tunnel, through which the creek passes.

In 1935, Father Mathias Gerend wrote in his memoir that he spent almost his entire life in St. Francis. Much of this article is based on Gerend's eyewitness accounts. He spent nine heady years as a seminarian, and after ordination as a diocesan priest, he spent eight years serving two missions in Dane County. When he returned to St. Francis, little did he realize that he would spend a lifetime working with the deaf charges at St. John's Institute for Deaf-Mutes. Spending 57 years of

his life in St. Francis would not have amounted to anything of significance had it not been for his prolific writing. It was borne out of necessity to financially support the deaf institution that he produced the publication of 'Our Young People' under the pen name of "Uncle Matt."

"Mattie," as he was called by his peers, registered at the seminary in 1872 at age fourteen. He had never been far from his home in Sheboygan, and his good parents — ever solicitous about his welfare — feared that he might get homesick. Some of the older boys did, but Mattie never felt lonesome. There was that wonderful woods, with its trees and flowers, squirrels and gophers, and Deer Creek with its fishes. How could he get lonesome?

Mattie recounted the fact that the Indians from Sheboygan County came to this location to spend a number of weeks on these old Indian playgrounds. Each fall of the year, all through the 1870s, Chief Solomon, with whom Mattie got well acquainted, would come with his family and pitch his wigwam not far from where the little chapel in the woods was located, and gather around the campfire. The seminary boys enjoyed watching them.



Reverend Mathias Gerend circa 1910



The left portion of St. John's Institute for Deaf Mutes was constructed in 1879. The right portion is the chapel built in 1893.

Always a “fan” of ice skating, Mattie continued to skate until the ripe age of 60. Well, he did say how good he was at it, such as cutting the figure eight about as well as anybody. Of course, sometimes, when showing off, he admitted to losing balance, and then he would cut a star in the ice — that was part of the game.

It took effort preparing the creek for ice-skating. Mattie explained: “In the fall of the year we barricaded the tunnel with whatever we could find near at hand — making a dam of the road embankment. This gave us a splendid bed for our purpose, and when it filled up in the course of a few weeks we had the prettiest little lake — all the way to the little chapel in the woods. All we needed then was cold weather, and that was on the way.”

GLORIOUS FORAGING

A great botanical note is offered here through the pen of Father Gerend:

In the fall of the year during the Recreation periods after dinner, or at other times, we would strike out for the woods to find out if the nuts weren't getting ripe; or we would practice for the next match game of ball — baseball or football, which was always a great event.

And when finally, the time came for harvesting the nuts, we would be in our glory; at least I was, because it was so much like home that I told you about in another chapter. All kinds of nuts, and berries too, and the most beautiful flowers, grew in the Nojoshing Woods in those early days, when cows were kept out and the rich undergrowth was not trampled down.

If we wanted hazel-nuts, we would go north to the district, which is now known as Fernwood and which in those days was one long continuous stretch of dense woods and underbrush — mostly hazelnut; or, if we wanted hickory-nuts, beech-nuts or butternuts, we would ramble south toward the little Chapel in the woods.

Of course, while we were classics we were supposed to have a permission to do this, because that domain was on the theologians' side of the house. It wasn't easy to get this permission. I was more fortunate than others because, as I told you before, I had an uncle at the Seminary who was a professor, Father Gernbauer, who said Mass in that little Chapel all the year around, except on very cold days, and I had to serve his Mass. It wasn't always so pleasant, but I enjoyed the privilege of going to that little Chapel whenever I wanted to in free time, because there was always something to be done there. The premises had to be kept clean and tidy, and in the

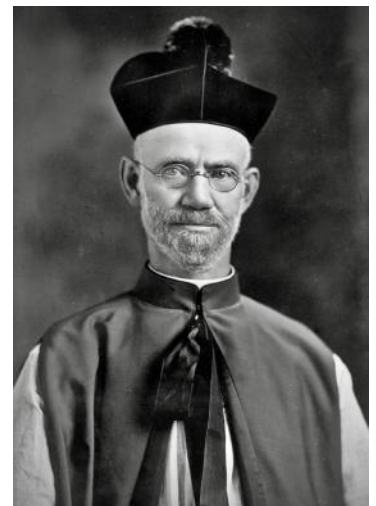
summer wild flowers had to be picked where-with to decorate the altar, etc. In the spring of the year, especially, there was very much work to be done — raking up the old leaves, and planting shrubs; then others would help me. And all those that worked for the little Chapel were treated to a bowl of coffee at vesper bread time; and that was something the boys appreciated very much. I never had trouble finding helpers.

Now — enjoying that privilege of going to the little Chapel at any time, I could look after those nuts. I knew every nut tree in the woods, and that is saying a great deal, for there were many of them, even a few black walnut trees.

Even botanists used to come to St. Francis in the 1860s — on account of its wonderful flora. Father Bruhin, who at this time had charge of St. Stephen's parish at New Coeln about five miles south of St. Francis, made regular visits to this “interesting woods.”

He was an authority in botany having made it a specialty all his life. It is he that discovered new species of plants and flowers in that woods that were not yet listed in Gray's *Flora of North America*. Later editions of that standard work, gave Father Bruhin credit for his discoveries.

(To be continued in the September newsletter)



The Right Reverend Monsignor Gerend. circa 1925



The chapel in the seminary woods was formally known as the Chapel-of-the Visitation.



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

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Newsletter

Anna Passante
Barbara Janiszewski

Mark Your Calendar

Meetings:

June 16, 2018	Board meeting
July 21, 2018	General Meeting
August 18, 2018	Board Meeting

Events:

July 7, 2018	Wisconsin Historical Society Regional Meeting
August 4, 2108	Dedication of the Lakeside Power Plant historical marker

Ice Cream Social La Finca at 1:00 pm and
dedication at the Plant site on Lake Drive &
Howard avenues at 2:00 pm.

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