



# NOJOSHING

Indian word for "straight tongue"

land protrudes out into Lake Michigan like a straight tongue

Newsletter published quarterly

Non-Profit Organization 501c3

## June 2020

*How is social distancing  
working for you?*

St. Francis Historical Society board member Barbara Janiszewski says:

Being in isolation has not been too much fun. I don't go out much - I no longer go to my book club at the library, the historical society board meetings, or grocery shopping every other week. Being forced to stay home and inside has really been getting to me. I've read, watched television (not too much because I'm not a television watcher), worked a jigsaw puzzle, worked crossword puzzles, and that's about it, other than the normal things I have to do every day.

My daughter forwarded this story to me and it gave me a chuckle. I hope you enjoy it too!!!!

Cheers, Barbara Janiszewski

## Isolation

*Just be careful because people are going crazy from being in isolation!*

*Actually, I've just been talking about this with the microwave and toaster while drinking coffee, and all of us agreed that things are getting bad.*

*I didn't mention anything to the washing machine as she puts a different spin on everything.*

*Certainly not to the fridge, as he is acting cold and distant.*

*In the end, the iron calmed me down, and she said everything will be fine, no situation is too pressing.*

*(continued page 2)*

*The vacuum was very unsympathetic --- told me to just suck it up but the fan was more optimistic and hoped it would all soon blow over!*

*The toilet looked a bit flushed when I asked his opinion and didn't say anything, but the doorknob told me to get a grip.*

*The front door said I was unhinged and so the curtains told me to ---YES, YOU GUESSED IT---pull myself together.  
-----Author unknown.*

## What's New?

### General Meeting July 18, 2020

The General Meeting is scheduled to take place on Saturday, July 18, 2020, at 9:30 am. at the civic center. Following the meeting, there will be a speaker from St. Ann's Center for Intergenerational. She will talk about the history of the Center and its development as part of the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi ministry.

Due to the Coronavirus situation, meetings may be canceled. If you plan to attend any of these meetings, please call Anna Passante at 262-327-8958 to confirm the meeting schedule.



### **New Gravestone in the Lake Protestant Cemetery**

Above is a granite gravestone the St. Francis Historical Society installed in the Lake Protestant Cemetery last fall. It is in memory of 5 shipwreck victims who were buried in the cemetery in 1855 and 1856.

The men listed on the left drowned in the sinking of the *Sebastopol* in 1855 near the beach along present-day Bay View Park. Listed on the right are two females, Kate Haring, age 11, and an unidentified woman, who drowned during the sinking of the *Niagara* off the coast of Port Washington. It took about a month for the two bodies to float down to St. Francis. More information about these victims can be found in the book *Lake Protestant Cemetery, Our Pioneers' Resting Place* by Anna Passante available on Amazon or through the St. Francis Historical Society office.



**Please consider including 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.**

### *News From the Cemetery*

The Wisconsin State Historical Society approved an historical marker for the Lake Protestant Cemetery (corner of Barland & Norwich avenues). St. Francis Historical Society was awarded \$900 at the South Shore Soup event this past February. Sponsored by South Shore Chamber of Commerce, the Soup event helps fund community projects. This grant will pay for the historical marker, which will arrive this summer. The St. Francis Department of Public Works will install the marker at the entrance to the cemetery. Please watch for the sign and visit the cemetery.



# St. Peter's Church

by Glenn A. Gierzycki  
Anna Passante, contributor

There is a building dating to 1839 and now that that was once located in the city of St. Francis is now preserved at Old World Wisconsin, in Jefferson County, Wisconsin, And, in a surprising twist, it wasn't built in the city of St. Francis! In a sense, it was just passing through.

Here is some of the background story. Father Patrick O'Kelley came to Wisconsin from Michigan in 1839. He was born in County Kilkenny, Ireland, and came to America in 1820. He was a pastor in Ann Arbor, Michigan, before coming to the Milwaukee area. At that time, Milwaukee was a mission of the Diocese of Detroit.

Father O'Kelly began construction of St. Luke's Roman Catholic Church shortly after his arrival in the summer of 1839, at the northwest corner of East Martin (now State) and North Jackson streets. The site, east of the Milwaukee River, was purchased from Solomon Juneau for \$5.00 "and other valuable considerations." Juneau himself was a Catholic. Juneau had offered two lots of land to the Catholic Church in 1837, but circumstances were not favorable until several years later. The small St. Luke's building (28' by 42') was in the Gothic Revival style with clapboard walls. It was still unfinished by the summer of 1842. It was the first Catholic church in Milwaukee.

Father O'Kelley went back to Michigan in 1842, perhaps due to sickness, but other factors may have caused his return. Churchgoers may have been frustrated with his numerous absences due to his constant travel for missionary work (he was active in establishing parishes in several places in southeast Wisconsin) or his inability to meld into a cohesive worshipping body of the Irish, French, and German churchgoers. It is thought that O'Kelley may not have been equipped to meet the needs of Catholic Germans who were arriving in great numbers.

Father Martin Kundig became the pastor of the church. He was born in Switzerland and was ordained in 1829 in Kentucky. Father Kundig was a tireless missionary who established numerous churches and parishes in southeastern Wisconsin. It was he who changed the church's name from St. Luke's to St. Peter's, to honor the baptismal name of



Father O'Kelley



Courtesy of Richard Muza

This photos shows St. Peter's at the Murray Street location, before it was moved to the St. Francis De Sales Seminary grounds.

Kundig's bishop in Detroit. Father Kundig set about to tend to his flock, including some changes to the church building. In the summer of 1842, pews were being made. Shortly after his arrival, he acquired a bell from a local Presbyterian church and a little later purchased an organ from them. He would have also bought the church building itself but the Presbyterian ladies had a fundraising fair and earned enough money to save their church.

In late 1844, the St. Peter's Church was enlarged to 48'x94', including an expanded basement. Improvements also included a new sanctuary, a new altar, and a new throne. An addition to its tower (steeple) was also made. The little building acted as a proc-cathedral or temporary cathedral for Milwaukee's Catholic faithful from 1844 to 1853, at which time, St. John the Evangelist Cathedral (which still stands) was completed at present-day 812 N. Jackson Street. Pope Gregory XVI created the Diocese of Milwaukee in 1843 largely through the efforts of Father Kundig. The first bishop was John Martin Henni, who was instrumental in the location of, and the building of, the St. Francis De Sales Seminary complex in present-day St. Francis, Wisconsin.

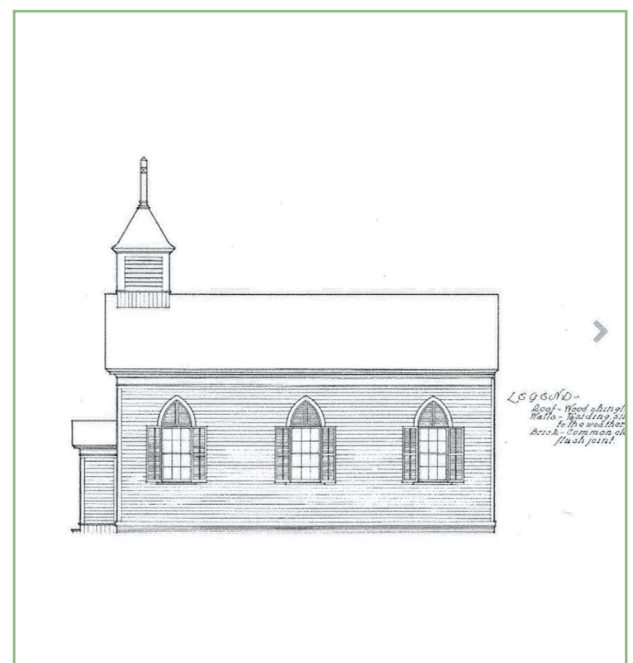
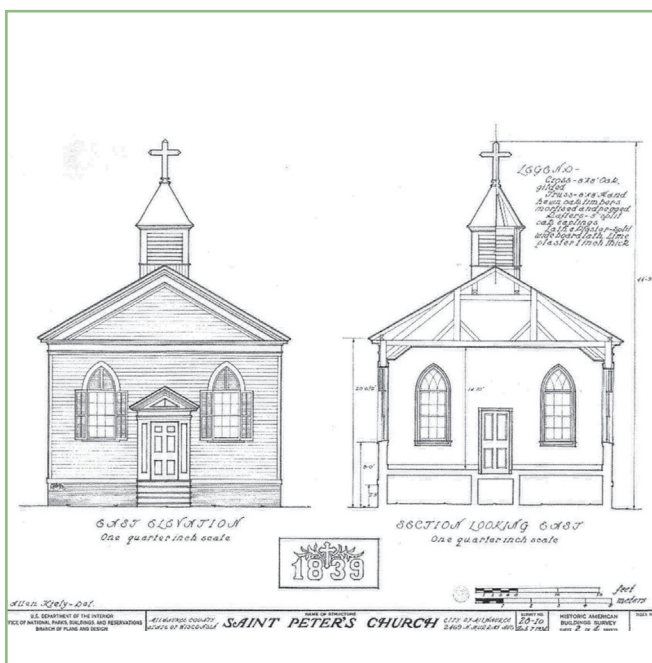


Father Kundig

When no longer a cathedral, the building was used for many activities, including a public school, where no religious instructions were given; a boys' school; a girls' school; a children's chapel; a Bohemian church; and a Sunday school. Some of these activities were held in the church basement.

By 1874, there was some thought of selling the church, as the expanding parish had built several new buildings and was in need of money. Monsignor Leonard Batz bought the church building for \$10,000 in October of 1874, but the land on which it sat was sold to another gentleman. Monsignor Batz was able to purchase the land in 1885. In 1889, he moved St. Peter's Church to the area of Cramer and Bradford streets, where it became part of the new Saints Peter and Paul Parish. Originally facing Cramer Street, it was later moved onto parish grounds at 2469 N. Murray Avenue.

As the building approached its 100th anniversary, Archbishop Stritch had a plan to move the building to the St. Francis De Sales Seminary grounds and restore it. The Milwaukee Archdiocesan Council of Catholic Women (MACCW), founded in 1920, were instrumental in assisting in the "cause of historical preservation." According to Msgr. Peter Leo Johnson's book *Halcyon Days*, St. Peter's Church was dismantled and transferred to the seminary grounds and was reassembled to be permanently preserved. The move occurred in October 1938. St. Peter's Church was not placed in the seminary woods but rather on the outskirts, near what is now known as Clare Hall, aka Heiss Hall. (Some confuse St. Peter's Church with the



Two architectural drawings of St. Peter's from the *Historic American Building Survey* (Library of Congress)



Chapel-in-the-Woods that was located in the seminary woods by the cemetery and the grotto. The Chapel-in-the-Woods was built at the site in 1876 and was razed in 1978 due to vandalism.)

The program for rededicating St. Peter's Church was on August 27, 1939 and was attended by 500 Milwaukee laymen and priests. Archbishop Stritch officiated at the cornerstone ceremony. He blessed the church, set the new stone, and preached a brief sermon. He pointed out that the 100-year-old church building had a historic meaning. It witnessed the early ordinations and was used as a chapel for the first seminary, then located in Milwaukee. Items were placed in the new 1939 cornerstone. Msgr. Bernard G. Traudt, vicar general of the local Catholic archdiocese, read the list of documents, seminary catalogs, newspapers, various records, and other items, that were placed in the new corner stone before it was set and sealed. Father Frank Pettit, pastor of St. Patrick's church, and Father William Bronner of the seminary faculty, assisted the archbishop. The seminary choir, directed by Sylvester Gass, sang. According to a *Milwaukee Journal* newspaper article, "the archbishop spoke of the courage of the early priests and church leaders and urged that modern churchmen carry on the spirit of the pioneers." It was expected that the chapel would have a permanent "museum" spot on the seminary grounds. It is not known if the church had been used as a chapel while it resided on the seminary property.

St. Francis Historical Society member Tom Mlinar remembers the building being at the seminary grounds, but he didn't remember seeing any activity around the building or it being opened to the public. It appears that by the 1970s, it had been used for storage and was kept locked for fear of vandalism.

Fast forward to August 1974 when St. Peter's Church was placed on the U.S. National Registry of Historic Places. Shortly after being placed on the Registry, the state Knights of Columbus, in commemoration



Historic American Building Survey (Library of Congress)

This photos shows St. Peter's at the Murray Street location, before it was moved to the St. Francis De Sales Seminary grounds.



Unidentified photo from SHS archives

Cornerstone being laid in 1939

of the United States Bicentennial, took interest in the building and made plans to move the building to Eagle, Wisconsin, in Jefferson County, where it would be reconstructed and restored to its original dimensions. The estimated cost was about \$30,000. It was important to the State Historical Society to include a church in the outdoor museum, since church played such an important role in the lives of the immigrant groups. Old World Wisconsin is operated by the Wisconsin Historical Society and is a park that preserves 60 old and historic buildings from Wisconsin's past. When Old World Wisconsin first opened in 1976, St. Peter's Church was one of several buildings at the site. The church has the same dimensions as the original church.

The presence of this little church was likely unnoticed by many residents of St. Francis and Bay View. It was stuck on the edge of the seminary woods where few people ventured. It is nice to know that a little piece of (temporary) St. Francis history has been preserved for future generations.



Courtesy of Glenn Gierzycki

**Above: St. Peter's Church at Old World Wisconsin**

**Below: Interior shot of St. Peters at Old World Wisconsin**



Courtesy of Glenn Gierzycki



## Developer Is Building Luxury Apartments On the Site of a Tragedy

by Anna Passante

Drive past St. Francis High School at 4225 South Lake Drive, and you will see building activity. Campbell Capital Group LLC is building a 236-unit apartment building across the street from the school. In 1839, that plot of land was once owned by George Wentworth, whose home sat on the hill now occupied by the high school building. Decades later, the plot of land under development was owned by the Lakeside Power Plant and rented out to the Pekar family, who farmed the land for decades.

Many St. Francis residents remember the tragedy that happened at the apartment building site on June 17, 1986. Dale A. Sabik, age 18, of South Milwaukee, was driving a front-end loader tractor, dumping concrete and dirt over the side of the bluff for erosion control. The bulldozer got too close to the edge and went over the embankment backwards and fell 65 feet. Slabik was killed. He was working for Shoreline Support Corp. and had been on the job only one week.

An inquest was held. After an inquest jury decided there was criminal negligence, Shoreline was criminally charged in Sabik's death. The jury of 6 women and 6 men, after only 90 minutes of deliberation, found the company guilty of homicide by reckless conduct. This was the first time a Wisconsin corporate entity was charged and convicted in a reckless homicide case. District Attorney Kenneth Berg claimed that Slabik should have been supervised and that Sabik was not adequately trained on the machine. Sabik had received only 24 hours of training. It was a job, Berg said, that should have been given to a highly trained and experienced operator. It was also claimed that Slabik was being paid below union scale and that co-owner Matuszczak knew of Slabik's epileptic condition. Shoreline was fined \$9,000.



Unidentified photo from SHS archives



**Left:** The bulldozer after it fell off the cliff and ended up in the lake.

**Above:** A photo of Dale A. Slabik from a South Milwaukee High School yearbook.



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 at the Civic Center:**

June 20, 2020, Board Meeting at 9:30 am

July 18, 2020, General Meeting at 9:30 am

August 15, 2020, Board Meeting at 9:30 am

(Please be aware that meetings may be canceled due to the Coronavirus. Before coming to the meeting, please call Anna Passante at 262-327-8958.)

#### **Upcoming events** (see "What's New" column for details)

*The historical society office (3400 E. Howard Avenue) is open by appointment only. Contact us at our office phone or email.*

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