



NOJOSHING

Indian word for "straight tongue"

land protrudes out into Lake Michigan like a straight tongue

Newsletter published quarterly

Non-Profit Organization 501c3

March 2021

Sadly, we lost Barbara Janiszewski at age 87, a long time member and Society treasurer, on January 6, 2021. A hard worker and a great contributor to the Society, she will be greatly missed by all of us.

Here is an article that Barbara submitted for *Meet Your Board* column of the newsletter in June 2015.

I grew up in Greendale and started kindergarten the first year the school opened. I completed K-12 in the same building. I worked in the accounting department of a leasing company, which was a part of M&I Corporation until I retired in 1998.

I've lived in St. Francis for 57 years but was never involved with anything in the city until about 2009. At that time, Lois Neubauer asked if I'd like to attend a board meeting of the historical society. Since I had recently stopped driving, I welcomed any opportunity to go somewhere. I liked it and continued attending meetings and was elected to the board in 2014.

Along with Anna Passante and Jan Pientok, I work one day a week at our office entering information into our computer system.

My hobbies include reading, mostly mysteries. I read every day, as I frequently tell my grandchildren and great-grandchildren (26 total and another on the way). I also enjoy cross-stitch, knitting, and crocheting. I make afghans - lots of them - and give them away to family and friends. I have donated many of them to various charitable organizations and schools for silent auctions.

The historical society is planning a memorial to Barbara's dedication to the Society, possibly a bench with a plaque. If you would like to donate, please send your check to the historical society office at 3400 S. Howard Avenue, St. Francis, WI 53235.

Thoughts from those who knew her:

Anna Passante, President

Four things Barbara loved: ice cream, peach pie, the color yellow, and dollar bills. She had a Christmas Club account where she deposited her collection of dollar bills.

(continued page 2)



Barbara loved throwing out candy to the children during the 4th of July and St. Francis Days parades. However, she usually misjudged and found she was out of candy by the time the parade hit Lunham Avenue. She said she just gets carried away!!!

Kathy Stilin, Librarian, St. Francis Library

I want to say these things about Barbara: She was an active participant in the Noon Book Club at St. Francis Library for many years. Her insights to the books the club read, great memory, and her sense of humor were always appreciated by all. Barbara always had something interesting to say about all the books we read. It was obvious that she was a voracious reader and really enjoyed reading! She was a great asset to the club. She will be missed!

Jennifer Mertz, former board member At some point in our relationship, Barbara asked me when my birthday was, and said that she enjoyed sending birthday cards. Sure enough, when my birthday arrived so did her card. It was humorous and chosen with my interests in mind. So like Barbara!

Jay Wesner, board member

The most memorable memory of Barbara that I have was on a Thursday afternoon in 2019, in the office where Barbara had been showing me how to enter data in the computer in the format that the historical society uses. We had just finished and were causally talking at the desk when Barbara mentioned to me her old story of being hit by a car while she was crossing the street. And how later when she was recovering at home, her up-stairs neighbor shot her. I was forewarned not to have her retell this incident of her life, but I felt honored to be included in this select group of friends that have heard her story retold so many times before.

Juliet Hills, former board member

Barbara’s feisty energy was engaging and catching. She truly appreciated her artist brother, and worked hard to do the right thing, honestly and carefully.

Carol Maudie, Society member

I knew Barbara for about 50 years. Our children knew each other. I have good memories of this time. I later connected through the Historical Society. She was my go to, if I had a question. Barbara loved to read, she loved the theater. We would share good plays to attend and good books to read, and her Facebook texts.

Penny Raclaw, Society member

I am so sorry to hear of Barbara’s passing. I give my sympathy to her family and friends. I have no personal memory to share, but I’ll always remember Barbara’s sweet smile and her kindness.

Karen Gersonde, Society member

She did so much for the society. May she Rest In Peace in the arms of God. She deserves it.

Rick Wier, Society member

Very sad loss for St. Francis & the Historical Society.

Nancy Goltz, Board member

I always enjoyed Barb’s beautiful bright yellow purse; I knew spring was on the way.

Jan Pientok, Board member

Barbara...what a smart cookie! How she loved her books and visits to museums. She was always the first to volunteer for any of our projects...and first in line if pies or ice cream was involved. We will miss her ‘muchly’.



Barbara (center) with Dave Goltz and Mary Drehfal at the registration table for the Wisconsin Council for Local History Regional Meeting that was hosted by the St. Francis Historical Society in July 2018.

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.



What's New?

Meeting Cancellations Due to Covid-19

Due to Covid-19, all meetings have been canceled until further notice.

Elections for Officer Positions Delayed

Due to Covid-19, the general meeting and the election of board members scheduled for January 2021 has been canceled. The election will be rescheduled for a later date.

2021 Membership

Due to the Covid-19 situation, the 2020 membership will be extended through 2021. No need to renew.

St. Francis Historical Society Member Ron Tessmer died June 4, 2020, at age 82

Ron Tessmer, along with his wife Marge, had a long history of membership and support of the St. Francis Historical Society. Ron passed away after a battle with Alzheimer's disease. He attended the annual historical society Christmas party and supported other events, although in recent years he lived in Franklin, Wisconsin.

I met Ron as a contestant in the Miss St. Francis pageant in 1980. He knew I played guitar and asked me to rewrite the words to Stevie Wonder's song "Isn't she Lovely" to fit the pageant theme that year. I didn't become Miss St. Francis that year, but I enjoyed meeting all the hard working volunteers including Ron. My aunt Millie Schimelfengy was the sister of St. Francis Fire Chief Bob "peewee" Schwingle. The fire chief was also an active volunteer and good friend of Ron's. I believe Bob was the primary person who encouraged Ron to work and support the historical society.

Ron was involved with St. Francis Days as an officer starting in 1967, and he was president of St. Francis Days from 1970-1975. He then served as executive director of the Miss St. Francis Pageant under Pageant President Robert Freimuth from 1979-1981. Tessmer was employed at Dittmore-Freimuth Corporation in St. Francis for many years.

CoryAnn St. Marie-Carls

Miss St. Francis 1986

Mayor of the City of St. Francis 2012-2018

Letter to the Editor from Julie Hughes

I wanted to take a minute to tell you how much I enjoy your newsletters. I have only been a member of the historical society for a year or so, but I really appreciate the hard work you do at the society. This month's newsletter [Sept 2020] was especially enjoyable. The week before I received it, I was telling my husband about the Harbor View Trailer Camp. (That is what we called it.) I remember it vividly and had classmates at Thompson School who lived there. One in particular was a boy in my kindergarten class (1950) who had had polio. He wore braces on both legs. As a kindergartner, that was really etched in my mind. I have often wondered what happened to him. He was a very friendly, happy boy.

I knew nothing about the origins of the Harbor View Village Subdivision. I had several friends who lived there. One in particular was my life long friend. She moved there with her family in 1953 and came to Thompson School. We attended high school and colleges together, stood up to each other's weddings and have remained friends. I sent her a copy of the newsletter and she, in turn, sent it on to her brother in South Dakota and her sister in Northern Wisconsin. She replied how she remembered her parents painting and staining in the new home late into the night, and how she and her two siblings would cry to go home. They were living in a crowded upper flat off of 11th and Mitchell with a cantankerous landlady. (You can imagine keeping three young kids quiet in an upper flat!) Her parents were thrilled to have this new two-bedroom home, thanks to the GI Bill. My friend was happy to learn of its origin.

I walked by the basement-less home on Thompson Avenue every day to and from school. I never realized it didn't have a basement.

Special "thank you" to Jay Wesner. Learning the history and seeing the different front elevations and floor plans was so very interesting to me.



Father Edward A. Bogusz, Muskego High School photo

Happy North Woods Vacation Turned Into a Fiery Tragedy

By Anna Passante

It was to be a north woods fun-filled vacation but it turned out to be a horrific tragedy when a fire broke out on June 9, 1969, in a rented cabin, killing 3 adults and 6 children of the Grede and Czachowski families. The two families had rented the 20' by 27' cabin on the east shore of Virgin Lake in Oneida County near Eagle River, Wisconsin, from Grede's uncle Alois Diedrich of Milwaukee. Older residents of the lake called the fire "the worst fire disaster in northern Wisconsin in decades." Also, killed in the fire was Father Edward A. Bogusz, a recently ordained Roman Catholic priest.

The Grede family members killed in the fire were parents Paul, age 34, and Ann, age 32, along with three of their four children: Paul, age 7; Ellen, 5; and Elizabeth, 2. Their daughter Mary, age 11, didn't go along. She was preparing for a Girl Scout camping trip. Ann was pregnant, due in October. The family lived in St. Francis at 2424 E. Whittaker Avenue.

Father Bogusz, 27 years old, had been recently assigned to St. Roman's parish. He was a friend of both families and formerly boarded with the Grede family.

The Czachowski family members killed in the fire were David, age 9; Ellen, 8; and Joseph, 6. Their mother, Barbara, had stayed back with

her other two children, Clare, 12, and Claudia, 11. The girls were preparing for a Girl Scout camping trip, the same trip that Mary Grede

was preparing for. Barbara planned to go up to the cabin later in the week. The family lived in the Bay View neighborhood at 3313 South New York Avenue.

Paul Grede, a salesman, had planned to return to St. Francis on Tuesday, June 10, and the rest were staying until Friday.

In a newspaper interview, Barbara Czachowski recalled how happy her three children were about going. She recalled "the bouncy delight of three of her young children, who couldn't wait to leave the Milwaukee area for their big adventure—a north woods vacation with their best friends." The two families were



MRS. BARBARA CZACHOWSKI AND FAMILY

Sacred Heart 1969 booklet photo of Barbara Czachowski and her 5 children



Army Captain Robert Czachowski



THE PAUL GREDE FAMILY

Sacred Heart Centennial 1869-1969 booklet photo of Paul and Ann Grede with their 4 children

very involved with the Christian Family Movement and belonged to the Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish in the city of St. Francis at 3635 S. Kinnickinnic Avenue. "The children thought of them (Gredes) almost as parents," said Barbara. Her husband, Army Captain Robert Czachowski, was serving in Vietnam at the time of the fire. He was due home in three weeks. Notified by the Red Cross, he was transferred to Germany, to be sent home.

Fire Breaks Out

In the pre-dawn hours of June 9, a fire was speculated to have started in an overheated barrel-type woodburning stove on the first floor. The fire raged through the 1½ story cabin. A motorist spotted the fire at 5 a.m. The fire was so hot that it melted the door of the cast-iron stove. By the time the fire department arrived, all that was left were four walls. The fire victims were sleeping on the second floor. There was only one stairway, and their escape route was probably blocked due to the heat of the fire. The roof and second floor collapsed to the first floor and that is where the bodies were found, burned beyond recognition. A dog was also killed.

Funerals

All the Grede and Czachowski children attended Sacred Heart of Jesus School. (The author of this article remembers seeing photographs of the 6 children hanging on the wall of the school office back in the 1970s.) All of the deceased Grede and Czachowski family members had their funeral services at Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish and were buried side-by-side in the Sacred Heart Cemetery. Rembowski Funeral Home at 2408 E. St. Francis Avenue took care of the funerals. Father Bogusz had his funeral service at St. Sylvester Church in Milwaukee and was buried at Holy Sepulcher Cemetery.

According to St. Francis Historical Society member Mike Rudolf, who lived down the block from the Grede's and car pooled with them, the surviving Grede daughter, Mary, "went on to live with her mother's sister and brother-in-law. He retired from the military in New Mexico and the family moved into the Grede house at 2424 E. Whittaker Avenue. Mary was raised with her cousins, the Plevaks."



Paul
Aged 9 years.
Ellen
Aged 7 years.
Elizabeth
Aged 2 years.
Beloved children of the late Paul F. and Ann Grede; they are survived by 1 sister, Mary Chris, paternal grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Grede, maternal grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Edward R. Koerschner, sr.
The Grede family is also survived by many other relatives and friends. Funeral Thurs. at Sacred Heart of Jesus Church at 9:30 a.m. Interment church cemetery. In state at the Rembowski & Son Funeral Home, 2408 E. St. Francis av. on Wed. from 4 to 9 p.m., with parish vigil at 8 p.m. Memorials to Sacred Heart of Jesus parish appreciated in lieu of flowers.

Grede children death notice

Czachowski Family
Of 3313 S. New York av. Mon., June 9.
David
Age 9.
Ellen
Age 8.
Joseph
Age 6.
Beloved children of Capt. and Mrs. Robert (Barbara, nee Tumas), Czachowski, sister and brothers of Clare and Claudia, grandchildren of Mrs. Kathryn Czachowski and Alfred Tumas; also survived by uncles and aunts, cousins and other relatives. Funeral Thurs. at 9:30 a.m. at Sacred Heart of Jesus church. Interment church cemetery. In state at the Rembowski & Son Funeral Home, 2408 E. St. Francis av., on Wed. from 4 to 9 p.m., with parish vigil at 8 p.m. Memorials to Sacred Heart of Jesus school appreciated in lieu of flowers.

Czachowski children death notice

Where the Wild Flowers Grow

By Karen Gersonde

Wow, these sure have been some trying times that we have been going through. Covid is still going on and today, as I write this, it is zero degrees outside. Too cold to really go outside and enjoy one's self, even if you are a winter lover. So to stay hopeful, my thoughts turned to springtime and better weather ahead. And as always, I look forward to newly blooming flowers.

Last spring in May, I decided to take a walk in the Seminary Woods with my cousin Ed. We both enjoy nature, and it had been a while since I had been in the woods. I grew up in there, as my childhood home was on the edge of it with the woods literally as our backyard. Yes, it is private property, and I very much respect that. I have always respected that all of my life, and I never remove, damage, or touch anything in there. All I do is take photos, and with them I make and take memories with me. As I am Catholic, I somehow feel connected to it. Always did, always will.

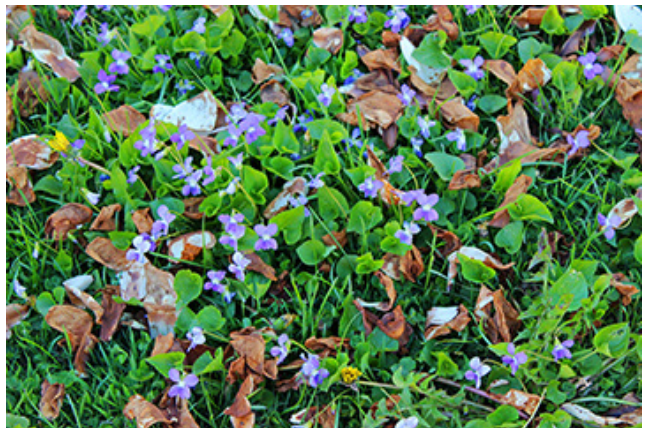
Springtime in the woods is beautiful. I have fond memories of playing in there as a child and seeing all the wildflowers. Growing up there in the 1960s, wood violets, yellow buttercups, and trilliums grew in there abundantly. I used to pick bouquets of these flowers and give them to my mother. She would then put them in a small glass vase. But she always told me not to pick the trilliums, as they were a special and protected wildflower. After that lecture, I always left them alone. To this day, I still do.

This time when I went into the woods, some of my childhood flowers were nowhere to be found. I was very surprised. But nature has its own mind and way of doing things and time changes many things. To my surprise, trout lilies were everywhere and had taken over the floor of the woods. There were acres and acres of white and yellow trout lilies, as far as the eye could see. Nowhere did I find my beautiful buttercups or the purple wood violets that Wisconsin is noted for.

Trout lilies grow in woodlands or forests in colonies. It is a perennial wildflower and is native to North America and Canada. The name trout lily refers to the appearance of its gray / green leaves mottled with brown or gray, which allegedly resemble a brook trout. They bloom in early spring before the leaves begin to bud and grow on the overhead trees. They require a lot of sun and hence, they are an early bloomer in the woods and forests. Their flowers will close up for the nighttime. Some colonies of these flowers are known to be 300 years old. Another name for them is the dog-toothed violet. Although most of them in the woods were yellow, there were some white ones also. They were just as stunning for a little diminutive plant. And yes, I did see trilliums in the woods yet, which was a welcoming sight. Just as beautiful as I had remembered them!



Three photos taken by Karen Gersonde of trout lilies in the Seminary Woods



Wood violets in the Seminary Woods

Seeing these hundreds and hundreds of trout lilies covering the floor of the woods was just amazing and awesome. A true reminder that spring was here. Although they were not part of my childhood memory of the woods years ago, they will stick in my mind now forever.

As for the wood violets, well, I did not find any in the woods this time. Maybe they were there, and I just didn't see them. Or maybe they were snuffed out by the Trout Lilies. I do not know. But to my surprise, at my childhood home which my brother now owns and abuts the woods, the backyard was covered in the purple wood violets. No, they were not creeping charlie weeds! They were the true wood violets. How they began to grow there, I'll never know. Maybe they were saying that they were still there for me. Nature has a strange way, you know. Either way, it sure was a pretty sight! I look forward to this spring and all the magic it has to offer. Zero degree weather, you can leave anytime now. I'll welcome spring!



Beech trees dominate the Seminary Woods.
(courtesy of the Milwaukee Area Land Conservancy,)



Two photos taken by Karen Gersonde of trilliums in the Seminary Woods

Wanted: Articles for the newsletter

Do you have a story that would be of interest to our members? Of course, the article must be about the St. Francis/Town of Lake area and may be edited for length.

Wanted: Photos

Do you have any OLD or VINTAGE photos of St. Francis/Town of Lake that may be of interest to our members? A couple descriptive sentences need to be submitted with each picture. If it is an old "mystery" photo, those would be grand, too.

Please send them to Anna Passante at passante.anna@yahoo.com, to our office at 3400 E. Howard Ave, St. Francis, WI 53235, or contact Anna at 414-316-4391



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

2021 Officers

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

Board of Directors

George Ramponi
Jan Pientok
Bill Drehfal
Jay Wesner
Nancy Goltz

Honorary

Ralph Voltner
Marge Tessmer
Kathy Matthew
Terry Duffey
Carol Wojtecki

Newsletter

Anna Passante

Mark Your Calendar

Meetings at the Civic Center:

Due to Covid-19, all meetings have been canceled until further notice.

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

The historical society office (3400 E. Howard Avenue) will be closed until further notice.

Facebook: St. Francis Historical Society

Email: st.francishistoricalsociety@gmail.com

Address: 3400 E. Howard Ave.

Website: stfranciswihistoricalsociety.org

Phone: 414-316-4391