



NOJOSHING

Indian word for "straight tongue"

land protrudes out into Lake Michigan like a straight tongue

Newsletter published quarterly

Non-Profit Organization 501c3

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Our historical society has lost one of its dearest friends and most influential members with the recent passing of Carl Kitzinger. Carl deserves all of the credit for our beautiful office and our museum quality displays in the civic center.

His passion for our city, our local history, and his love of people in general is his legacy. He was a friend to us all. Thanks, Carl. We love you.

~~~~~Bill Drehfal, past historical society president and current board member.

### Carl Kitzinger

Franklin, Wisconsin

November 24, 1923 - June 27, 2023

## Carl Kitzinger, Barrel Maker and Philanthropist

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by Anna Passante

If you wanted to know something about barrel making, you just had to ask Carl Kitzinger. He would have given you a lesson on how they are made. He had a good teacher. His father, Jacob, learned the craft in Hungary and passed the knowledge to his two sons, Carl and Jacob Jr.

### Jacob Kitzinger Sr.

Jacob Sr. was born in Santanna, Hungary, in 1889 and sailed to America in 1913. He wasn't an immigrant but rather working aboard ship as a cooper's apprentice. When the ship landed in America, Jacob jumped ship. Jacob eventually sent for his wife, Marie, and their eight-year-old daughter, Eva. World War I broke out in Europe in 1914 and ended in 1919, so it wasn't surprising that Marie and Eva didn't arrive until 1921 on the ship Mount Clinton.

The family lived on a farm in Berkshire, New York, for about a year. Daughter Mary was born there. The family traveled to Baltimore, Maryland, where Carl and Jacob were born. According to city directories, by 1927 the family was residing in Madison, Wisconsin, working as a cooper on a farm. Their last child, Helen, was born there.

By 1930, the family was living in Cudahy on Morris Avenue, Jacob employed at the Cudahy Brothers Company making pork barrels. He also worked out of his two-car garage on Morris Avenue making barrels. But he needed more room.

### The Kitzinger family moves to St. Francis

In 1935, the family moved to a 10-acre property in present-day St. Francis at 3200 East Waterford Avenue.



Pictured here is the Kitzinger family home that still stands on Waterford Avenue. At one time, the building housed the Shamrock Riding Academy. Photo shows part of the building being reduced to make room for the new road.

At that time, Waterford Avenue only went as far east as Barland Avenue. There was a cement-block building on the property that once housed the Shamrock Riding Academy. The Town of Lake planned to extend Waterford Avenue eastward. Half of the old riding academy building, which was 150 feet long, was in the way of the future road. So Jacob reduced the building to half, to make way for the extended Waterford Avenue.

The structure housed the family and the shop where Jacob made wine and beer barrels. With the help of four men, Jacob made eight barrels a day. Jacob's son Carl was known to sleep in the shop in a hammock hung from the rafters. The family had two cows and chickens and no running water or refrigeration. A spring provided water and was used to keep perishables cold.



Jacob Kitzinger, Sr. Morris Avenue, 1933

Carl attended St. Frederick's Catholic School in Cudahy and later attended nearby Thompson School. He recalled the bell that once hung in the old school building. (Later razed to make room for the new building in 1939.) Carl helped build a stand for the bell, and it was placed in the hallway of the new school. The bell was mighty tempting to the school children who itched to pull the string, letting the bell ring out through the school hallways. Some gave in to the temptation and were punished by the principal. Carl soon gave in, too. But in order not to get caught and punished, he tied a rope to the bell and strung it across the street to the abandoned Lake Protestant Cemetery. Hiding among the tall weeds and gravestones, Carl oh-so-gently pulled the string and rang the bell. He didn't get caught! (Or so he says.) It appears that the cemetery played an important

role in many a student shenanigan. Some mischievous boys knew there were some mice in the graveyard and secretly placed them in teacher Miss Olive's desk drawer. Oh my!

Pearl Higgins sat in front of Carl in school, and he dipped her pigtails in his ink well. One time the teacher slapped him, and he went home, only to have his father send him back.

Carl left school at 16, but he was not forced to do so because of his mischief making, mind you. Most young men at 16 left school by that age. When World War II was raging in Europe, Carl enlisted and served in the European sector of the war. Brother Jacob didn't go to war, instead taking



Norwich Avenue shop 1959

up a job with a wholesale druggist. With no one to help him in the barrel-making business and because of the lack of steel, Jacob Sr. closed the business and opened a tavern in South Milwaukee. Jacob Sr. died in 1947.

### Barrel factory moves to East Norwich Avenue

Back from the war, Carl reopened his father's business with Jacob Jr. at the family home on Waterford Avenue. They made barrels for milk, buttermilk, oils, and grease. When the trend for steel drums impacted the use of wooden ones, the brothers turned to reconditioning steel drums.

The company soon needed to expand and incorporate, which they did in 1951 at their new location at 2529 East Norwich Avenue. Here they reconditioned drums and barrels by burning them out and testing for leaks by forcing air into the drums, and then plunging them into a vat of water. Air bubbles revealed any leaks. Some barrels were repaired by welding, dents were removed, the barrels sandblasted, washed, and painted. Another plant building made new steel barrels and drums from 18-22 gauge sheet metal.

Carl married Lucille and they lived on Whittaker Avenue in Greenfield. In 1968, Carl and Lucille purchased a 250-acre farm near Fort Atkinson. The following year, his brother wanted out of the business, so Carl bought Jacob out and became sole owner. In 2011, Carl sold the Kitzinger Cooperage Corporation to Mid-America Steel Drum Company of Oak Creek.

### Carl Kitzinger's philanthropy work

Carl was a generous donor to the Ronald McDonald House, a "home away from home" for families whose lives are disrupted as a result of their child's illness or injury. Carl was good friends with one of the founders, Sol Steren, back when Steren was an owner of a McDonald's restaurant in Cudahy. When a capital campaign was initiated for expansion of the Ronald McDonald House, Carl made an initial donation that jump-started the campaign.

Carl generously supported St. Ann Center for Intergenerational Care (Stein Campus) for many years. He was also one of the first individuals to donate to the St. Ann Center Bucyrus Campus at 2450 West Fond du lac Avenue. This new center cares for hundreds of children and adults in the 53206 area code.

In 1997, the St. Francis Library Foundation was established to develop the lower level of the library for the children's section. Carl's generous gift helped bring that project to fruition.

### Carl Kitzinger was a patron of the St. Francis Historical Society

At one time, the St. Francis Historical Society's headquarters was at the old Lupo House, at East Denton and Kirkwood avenues. (It was named for the Lupo family, the last residents of the house.) Owned by the city of St. Francis, in 2010, the city decided to tear down the house due to high maintenance costs. The historical society had to explore options for a new location.

According to past president Bill Drehfal, years earlier, Mayor Milt Vretner had drawn up building plans for a new historical society building, but those plans were put on hold when the Lupo House location became available. After losing the Lupo House, Vretner's plans were dusted off, and the society had to explore ways to pay for a new building. That was a challenge since the society's finances were at rock bottom.

About that time, said Drehfal, Mayor Vretner called a friend who he thought might be able to help financially. This friend was Carl Kitzinger. Carl said he was willing to cover all of the cost for a new building. About that time, the city leaders were talking about replacing the old city hall building on Nicholson Avenue, along with the fire and police departments.

The historical society board wondered: Could the society be part of the new building discussion? Carl thought so. He felt the society would have built-in traffic at a civic center, which the society would lack at a stand-alone building.



Above: Toni Grabske Nevicosi, Bill Drehfal, Karen Kitzinger, Mary Mingesz, and Carl Kitzinger pose in front of two of the new display cabinets at the new St. Francis Civic Center.



Carl Kitzinger 1949



Backyard of Waterford Avenue property 1936

At one of the planning meetings, retired Mayor Milt Vretner, Mayor Al Richards, and City Administrator Ralph Voltner promoted Carl's idea. To boot, Carl was willing to pay for the historical society to be a part of the new civic center. "I was in shock when Milt phoned me with the news," said Drehfal. "I felt a miracle had taken place. And the historical society board of directors was in disbelief when I shared the news with them." Their disbelief was soon followed with smiles, laughter, and a BIG thank you prayer. "Happiness is the word that comes to mind when I think back on that moment. We are blessed to have Carl as a member," said Drehfal.

Initially, Carl planned to give \$500,000 for the historical society to be included in the city project. However, Carl insisted the society have a long term lease agreement as part of the agreement. The common council approved. The St. Francis Civic Center was dedicated in 2014, and thanks to Carl, the historical society was part of it.



## Area resident names a new apple variety “Town of Lake”

Amy Asp loves apples!! So it isn't surprising she is excited about a special apple tree in her backyard. Her tree is so unique that Dr. Cameron P. Peace, a science professor at the Department of Horticulture, Washington State University, bestowed on her the honor of naming the apple that grows on that tree.

The backstory goes like this: When her family moved into their house at 3680 South Brust Avenue 15 years ago, they didn't know what kind of tree was in the backyard. It had a five-foot circumference and was taller than their two-story house.

By fall the mystery was solved. There were a ton of apples on the tree. According to Amy, “The apples taste extremely sweet, but the taste isn't distinctive or unique.” Amy thinks the apples were grown for cider. She mixes the apples with another variety of apple and makes quarts and quarts of applesauce. She also slices some to freeze.

Amy's desire to identify the type of apple led her to contact Weston Orchards in New Berlin, Wisconsin, ten years ago, but they weren't familiar with that variety of apple tree. Theresa Quednow of Quednow's Heirloom Apple Orchard in Abells Corners, Wisconsin, near Elkhorn, Wisconsin, took some scion wood from Amy's apple tree and grafted it to one of the Quednow's trees. It didn't grow well. Amy thinks the colder winters were to blame.

In June 2022, Amy and her son sent leaf samples from their apple tree to Dr. Peace at Washington State University. Dr. Peace is working on mapping the genome of apple varieties. Amy heard about his project when she took an apple grafting class at Weston Orchards. She filled out the required form and was assigned an identification code. There was a space to write in a name in case her apple didn't match an existing variety. According to Amy, her property was formerly part of a large farm in Town of Lake that included present-day Tippecanoe Park and Clement Avenue School. So she chose “Town of Lake” because it had a nice ring to it. Amy's son, who she says is more meticulous than she is, wrapped some of the apple leaves in damp paper towels and placed them in a Ziploc bag. They sent them off to Dr. Peace. The process cost her \$120, but she didn't mind the cost if it helped solve the mystery of the apple tree. It took awhile since Dr. Peace had more than 100 samples to evaluate. Amy got the DMA profiling results in March of this year. Here is what Dr. Peace had to say about Amy's apple tree:

Town of Lake (AAAM-001): Unique, not matching identity to anything in our dataset so far. However, both of its parents were identified: Northwest Greening and Wealthy. Curiously, these are the same two parents as the Minnesotan cultivar Fireside (a grandparent of Zestar). The cross that created Fireside was more than a hundred years ago and the cultivar was eventually commercially introduced in 1943. Perhaps your Town of Lake tree was obtained as a selection from the same family raised by the Minnesota Agricultural Experiment Station (in Excelsior).

Amy was pleased that her apple tree is so unique that it has its own name and that she was the one to name it Town of Lake. Since they bought the house 15 years ago, the apple tree is showing its age. Bark is missing from one side of the trunk. Nowadays, Amy gets no more than a bushel of apples per year. She doesn't think the tree will last too many more years. But she will always remember the goodly amount of apples the tree produced the first year of their ownership. There were so many that she had to buy a Breville Juice Fountain to use up all the apples, because she was brought up not to waste food. She remembers the salesperson saying, “You could juice the whole tree with that thing.”



Top: The Town of Lake apple  
Above: The apple tree is showing its age.

# What's New?

## **Dedication of Historic Building Plaque**

An historic building plaque will be placed at 3724 South Kinnickinnic Avenue, a building of historical significance to the city's history. Rain or shine, the dedication will take place on Saturday, September 10, 2023, at 1:00 pm and will be followed by an ice cream social. It is free to the public. See story below for details.

## **2024 Calendar Photo Contest Entry Winners**

### **Town of Lake Category Entries:**

- 1st Place "Hay Time" Ed Wagner \$75.00
- 2nd Place "Friends Hanging Out" Karen Gersonde \$50.00
- 3rd Place "Brothers Tending Cows" Ed Wagner \$25.00

### **City of St. Francis Category Entries:**

- 1st Place "The Ace Pigeon Club" Carol Wojtecki \$75.00
- 2nd Place "Friends in Car" Karen Gersonde \$50.00
- 3rd Place "8th Grade Graduation" James Hempel \$25.00

### **Honorable Mentions:**

- "Having Some Fun" Carol Wagner \$10.00
- "Field Hands" Ed Wagner \$10.00
- "Prize Strawberry Patch" Ed Wagner \$10.00
- "Augusta and Amelia at Wedding" Karen Gersonde \$10.00
- "Tending Chickens" Carol Wagner \$10.00
- "On a Horse Named Blackie" James Hempel \$10.00
- "Burro Named Poncho" James Hempel \$10.00

## **Dedication of a Historic Building Plaque**

The St. Francis Historical Society is excited to announce the dedication of another historic building plaque!! It is to be placed at 3724 South Kinnickinnic Avenue on a building of historical significance to the city's history.

Rain or shine, the dedication will take place on Saturday, September 10, 2023, at 1:00 pm, followed by an ice cream social. It is free to the public. The last such marker was placed in 2016, on the John F. Koenig house at 3849 South Packard Avenue.

The building at 3724 South Kinnickinnic Avenue is now the location of Lovely Salon & Spa. Possibly the oldest building in the city of St. Francis, it was originally built as a tavern by Victor Schuerbrock. Born in Prussia in 1836, Victor immigrated to Ohio in 1843 and to Milwaukee in 1859. That year he married Barbara Schoenhofer. In 1864, they purchased this property, a total of 36 acres and built the tavern and farmed the acreage.

Victor fought in the Civil War from December 1864 to July 1865 with the 17th Wisconsin Infantry, serving under General Sherman. Schuerbrock took part in Sherman's famous march to the sea.

The Schuerbrocks ran the tavern and also resided in the building. They had eight children. A south addition was most likely added shortly after 1865. In 1892, the family moved into a new house to the north of the tavern, which still exists at 3704 South Kinnickinnic Avenue. Barbara died in 1902 and Victor died in 1914. Daughters Katie and Nettie continued living in the house.

Paul Welbes leased the tavern from the sisters about 1927 until about 1933. The late Andrew Koenig recalled that Welbes had a horse shed in back of the tavern: "It was kind of a lean-to with a wall to the north, where the prevailing winds usually came from. You just parked both the horse and buggy in there when you went to church...that also gave people an excuse to 'stop in' the tavern after Mass." Welbes lost his liquor license when he was convicted of taking a bribe from a road contractor. While he served his 27-month sentence, his wife Della ran the bar. Later, his wife Della divorced him.



Top: The original exterior of the Schuerbrock before it was remodeled in the 1960s.

Above: Present-day 3724 S. Kinnickinnic Ave. Tavern before it was remodeled in the 1960s





Paul and Della Welbes in happier days

After the Welbes vacated the tavern, Katie and Nettie Schuerbrock leased the tavern to Barney Felden around 1934, and he moved in with his wife and children. Felten had grown up across the street. Before taking over the tavern, he ran a grocery store in the present-day Izzy's Tapp building. In 1947, Felden bought the tavern from sisters Katie and Nettie. Part of the purchase was the Schuerbrock family home at 3704 S. Kinnickinnic Avenue, as well as some acreage. (Felden's daughter Florence Jucha and her husband lived for a while in the old Schuerbrock family home.)

When Barney Felden died in 1952, the tavern was sold to a couple by the name of Ann and Ray, last name unknown. The couple only stayed one year.

In 1954, Sylvester "Sal" Poehr bought the tavern. He and his wife Sylvia ran Sal's Tap and lived with their children there. The tavern was a gathering place for St. Francis politicians and sponsored softball and bowling leagues. It was in the 1960s that the Poehrs remodeled the tavern building removing its "boomtown" facade.

Asphalt siding was placed over the wood siding. A north addition was added for a game room, which included a basement.

Sal died in 1979. Sylvia ran the tavern alone until January 1980, when she leased it their son Richard "Dick." It was called Rap's Tap (for Dick's initials), and he operated it until August 1988.

In 1989, Sylvia leased the tavern. The tavern Faye's Craze operated there until 1994. In 2005, Gloria Brandenburg purchased the building from Sylvia Poehr and opened On the Right Track Roadhouse Cafe. She also ran a hair salon at the rear of the northern addition. The café and hair salon operated until 2012.

The building was then sold in 2015 to Lovey Salon & Spa owner, Joan Kelly. The City of St. Francis & St. Francis Civic Association honored Joan Kelly with the 2018 Business

of the Year award at the 49th Annual Industry & Commerce Appreciation Night.



Above: Barney and Anna Felden on their wedding day  
Right: Barney Felden in 1950



Top left: Sal and Sylvia Poehr

Bottom left: An early 1950s photo of the Sal's Tap barroom. On the bar stool is Jerome Madunich.

Bottom right: Track Roadhouse Cafe owned by Gloria Brandenburg





# Shipwreck Presentation Photos

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Top Right: James Heinz, from the Wisconsin Marine Historical Society, presented a great talk on June 22 at the civic center about Lake Michigan shipwrecks.

Above: The audience found the program informative.  
Right: St. Francis residents Ralph & Ava Voltner enjoyed the program.



# 4th of July Parade



Little Henry enjoyed his ice cream after the parade. Henry is the youngest member of the St. Francis Historical Society.

Above: The St. Francis Historical Society is ready to hit the parade route.

From left to right: George Ramponi, Anna Passante, Stephanie Maxwell, Joe O'Halloran, and Henry, son of Stephanie & Joe, in the wagon.



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

### **2023 Officers**

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

### **Board of Directors**

George Ramponi  
Jan Pientok  
Mary Drehfal  
Jay Wesner  
Marge Tessmer

### **Honorary**

Ralph Voltner  
Marge Tessmer  
Kathy Matthew  
Carol Wojtecki

### **Newsletter**

Anna Passante

### ***Mark YourCalendar***

#### **Meetings at the St. Francis Civic Center at 3400 E. Howard Ave.:**

**The monthly board meetings are the 3rd Saturday of the month at 9:30 a.m. Visitors welcomed.**

September 16, 2023

October 21, 2023

November 18, 2023

**Upcoming events** (see “What’s New” column for details)

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**Website:** [stfranciswihistoricalsociety.org](http://stfranciswihistoricalsociety.org)

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