

# 'NOJOSHING'

The official Newsletter of the St. Francis Historical Society

4235 South Nicholson Avenue  
St. Francis, Wisconsin 53207  
(414) 481-2300

SUMMER 1990

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## ST. FRANCIS HISTORICAL SOCIETY:

WE ARE

*"SERIOUS ABOUT NOJOSHING"*

## ST. FRANCIS / OLD TOWN OF LAKE AREA TRAILS"

by Chris Barney

### "GROWING OUT OF A DEPRESSION"

At the time of Charles Augustus Lindbergh's historic 1927 visit to the Town of Lake and Milwaukee County, the county's new airport was a mere shadow of the sprawling complex that exists today. The fledgling facility was comprised of a mere 163 acres, operated out of a farmhouse terminal, and had two runways of compacted cinders which were less than 2,000 feet in length. The recently inaugurated Northwest Airways passenger service used Stinson SB-1 Detroit biplanes which were fitted with skis during winter. The small hangar which Thomas Hamilton had built in 1920 to facilitate his propeller business was shared briefly with



In 1942 (in the above photo), Milwaukee County leased a part of General Mitchell Field to train pilots for the Army Air Force's Air Transport Command. This view from the roof of the National Guard hangar on Howell Avenue shows some of the Douglas C-47 transport planes used in that training. The Northwest Airways hangar and recently built terminal on East Layton Avenue can be seen near the top center of the photo. The photo below shows a close-up of the terminal building from the "field side," shortly after its opening in 1941.

Both photos by Albert Toepfer,  
courtesy Milwaukee County Historical Society.



county airport personnel, who used their portion as a temporary terminal until the farmhouse was converted. A rival "aerodrome," De Young Field, began to operate shortly thereafter on farmland along the east side of Howell Avenue but was later absorbed by expansion. By 1929 the county had erected a pair of larger hangars, had widened its existing runways and added an additional north-south runway of 2,000 feet and a northeast-southwest runway of 1,700 feet, both of compacted cinders.

October 1929, of course, saw the stock market crash which brought about the Great Depression. Despite the massive financial setbacks that followed nationwide, Milwaukee County Airport still experienced modest growth and expansion. 1931 saw the opening of a new, larger



*The beginnings of Milwaukee County's Mitchell Airport are shown in the above photo taken October 21, 1926, eight days before the county's purchase of the field from Thomas Hamilton, a propeller and metalplane manufacturer. A Fokker Trimotor, the largest commercial plane in use at the time, is shown at right in the photo. The four stacks of Lakeside Power Plant can be seen near the top center of the photo. By September 13, 1939, the bottom photo shows the runway improvements and construction progress of the new Layton Avenue Air Terminal (center of photo) which opened in 1941.*

*-Albert Foepfer photos, MCHS collection-*



Northwest Airways hangar and an additional story added to the farmhouse terminal for radio and meteorological equipment. The increase in both airline traffic and aircraft size during the 1930's spurred the county's request for WPA (Works Progress Administration) project funding to construct a new terminal building directly behind the outmoded farmhouse structure on East Layton Avenue. Approval from the Bureau of Air Commerce came in May 1938, and the structure was completed on July 1, 1940. By this time the airport's size had increased to 378 acres.

On March 17, 1941 the airport, with its newly opened terminal, was - after a seven-month controversy - renamed General Mitchell Field in honor of Brigadier General William "Billy" Mitchell, a Milwaukee native and a staunch advocate of air power as part of the national defense. Born in 1879, Mitchell, a career Army officer, served in both the Spanish-American War and World War I. He was the grandson of Alexander Mitchell, a prominent Milwaukee banker and railroad financier, and the son of John Lendrum Mitchell, a civic leader and a United States Senator from Wisconsin. General Mitchell ended a 28-year military career in 1926, and continued to promote the growth of military air supremacy and commercial aviation until his untimely death in February 1936 at the age of 56.

The growing airport had carried Mitchell's name for a scant nine months when the United States was once again thrust into world war as a result of Japan's brutal surprise attack of U.S. naval forces at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii on December 7, 1941. Mitchell Field became an important part of the war effort: in 1942 the Army Air Force leased a portion of the airport in order to conduct a training school for pilots of the Air Transport Command. The recently completed Air National Guard Armory and Tower on Howell Avenue - built on the site of the unsuccessful De Young Field - was used by the USAAF as a base for these operations. (The armory, though recently re-sited, is in private use today.) As World War II began nearing its end, a portion of the field was used to house German prisoners-of-war. Throughout the war's duration, the Army Air Force referred to the airport as "Billy Mitchell Field" - when the airport was returned to county control on February 5, 1948 the official name, General Mitchell Field, was once again used.

Airport officials, almost as soon as the new Layton Avenue terminal had opened, realized the facility would soon prove inadequate to serve the ever-growing needs of the burgeoning airline industry. In March 1945 a master plan was submitted to the Milwaukee County Board. In the study, further airport expansion and construction were recommended, to include a new terminal complex centrally located on the west side of the airport grounds along Howell Avenue, to have three traffic piers and a large apron. It would be more than five years before these ideas would begin to reach fruition. In the meantime, as airline traffic and aircraft size and power increased, congestion, confusion and criticism would become a mounting problem at the Town of Lake's General Mitchell Field.

(NEXT TIME: A Postwar Boom - and an Inevitable Clash.)

## GENERAL MEETING — JULY 30TH

The next general meeting of the St. Francis Historical Society will be held on Monday, July 30th, at the St. Francis Community Center, 3476 E. Howard Avenue, beginning at 6:00 p.m. with a potluck supper. The general public is invited to attend. There will be turkey and gravy provided by the ladies of the society - members are asked to bring a side dish serving 6-8 people. Salads, vegetables and desserts are suggested, as well as potatoes and stuffings. The entertainment for the meeting will be provided by Mr. Dale E. Kuntz, of Milwaukee Film Classics, with his presentation of "*I Heard That Song Before*," an idea he originally conceived, edited and produced.

Throughout Hollywood history, many songs have been used and re-used in numerous films. The reasons vary: a song is in Public Domain and therefore the studio does not have to pay any fees for using it; a studio owns the right to a song (ala 20th Century Fox's "*You'll Never Know*") and since they own the song they don't have to pay any residuals, no matter how many times they use it; a composer owns the rights to his songs and can use them in any film he has written the score for. A "Public Domain" song typifies a certain era or period in which the film takes place.

"*You've Heard That Song Before*" shows how Hollywood could take the same song, use it again, and take an entirely different approach to the song. It is the same . . . yet it is different. And - sometimes - you don't realize that "you've heard that song before."

Some of the songs and stars included in Reel One are: "*Carry Me Back to Old Virginny*" - first heard as a love duet between Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy in "*Maytime*" and then by Alice Faye, as a dance hall queen in the film, "*In Old Chicago*." "*Easter Parade*" first sung by Don Ameche and then Bing Crosby. "*Night and Day*," first by Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers and then Deanna Durbin. "*The Last Time I Saw Paris*," as first introduced by Ann Southern and later sung by Dinah Shore. And a rare one: "*Sweetheart Waltz*" first sung by Jeanette MacDonald in "*Sweethearts*" and then sung again by Miss MacDonald ten years later in "*Three Daring Daughters*." Other stars heard are Dennis Morgan, Ann Sheridan, Roy Rogers, Judy Garland, Betty Grable and John Payne. See you at St. Francis Community Center at 6:00 p.m. on Monday, July 30th!!



Alice Faye and Tyrone Power in the 1938 release of "*IN OLD CHICAGO*." In a clip from this film, Alice sings "*Carry Me Back To Old Virginny*."

Dale E. Kuntz Collection

## ABOUT OUR GUEST . . .

**Dale Edmund Kuntz** is one of Wisconsin's leading film historians . . . and Milwaukee's most popular program speaker. His interesting and delightful comments (including highlights of film history, insight into the making of a film and anecdotes on the stars) introducing each film are equally enjoyed by film buffs, senior citizens, students, club members and audiences who "just go to the movies."

He is president of **Milwaukee Film Classics** and introduces the film shown each week to the general public at **St. Mary's Academy Auditorium** in Bay View at **3195 S. Superior St.** He is also president of a local film society, **FOOFS** (Followers of Old FilmS), a position he has held for over twenty years. He is program coordinator for the "**Cinema for Seniors**" and other film programs for Milwaukee's Performing Arts Center. As a free-lance writer, he has written articles for such local magazines as "*Exclusively Yours*" and "*Milwaukee Magazine*" and national film magazines. Dale collaborated with Mr. Philip Castanza of New York City on the very successful book, "*The Films of Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy*." He is now working on two additional film books, including "*The Films of Deanna Durbin*."

For four years Dale was seen on local television, appearing on Channel 12's "*Dialing for Dollars*," having within the show's format his own segment entitled "*Movies' Magic Moments*" . . . his version of MGM! He also wrote and produced his own ten minute segment in the syndicated TV program, "*Take Two*," entitled "*Hollywood; Then and Now*." He was film curator for the **Milwaukee Art Museum** and over the years has been heard on many local radio programs and interview shows.

On a personal basis, Dale has been collecting movie memorabilia since he was a teenager. Of his vast collection, which includes thousands of 8"x10" movie stills, many original movie posters, books, reference volumes, star biographies and studio histories, his largest collection is on his all-time favorite star, **Jeanette MacDonald**. His largest collection on a single film title is "*Gone With The Wind*," and includes his most cherished collection item - a copy of the original motion picture edition of the book, personally autographed by **Miss Vivien Leigh**.

Mr. Kuntz is available to all groups - civic organizations, men's and women's clubs, church groups, senior citizen groups, schools, private organizations and even private parties - for a complete film program. His popular programs consist of either a feature film, film clips or a slide presentation . . . all with introductory remarks or running commentary. Contact Mr. Kuntz at **(414) 466-1877** for details.

**Milwaukee Film Classics** programs are part of a continuing film classic schedule at **St. Mary's Academy Auditorium, 3195 S. Superior St.** - Milwaukee's only film revival house. Films are shown on **Sundays at 1:30 p.m.** and **Tuesday through Thursday at 7:30 p.m.**, and there are different film programs every week. Film schedules can be obtained by calling Mr. Kuntz at **(414) 466-1877**.

## RE-CAP OF APRIL 30TH GENERAL MEETING

A potluck supper preceded the business portion of the meeting, which began at 7:15 p.m. Nineteen members and one guest were present. Secretary Millie Schimelfenyg read the minutes of the January annual meeting; Treasurer Marge Symkowski read the March treasurer's report, which was accepted by the membership. The committee chairpersons present each gave a brief status report, followed by a brief summation by President Ron Tessmer of other activities the society is involved in, such as designating a local history week in St. Francis and the status of the Lakeside Power Plant Gatehouse. Vice President and Programs Chairperson Diane Johnston then introduced a thoroughly entertaining program given by Milwaukee Reflections, Ltd. entitled "Portraits of Milwaukee Women." Thanks are extended to all who participated in this enjoyable meeting.

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT . . .

To be treasured are the things that link us with the past. Forgetting would be a distinct loss to all of us.

— Contributed by Kathy Schwingle

## PROJECTS IN PROGRESS

- Ron Tessmer reports that there is still no word forthcoming from the city of St. Francis with regard to granting permission for the society to move the **Lakeside Power Plant Gatehouse** from its original site on S. Lake Drive to St. Francis Memorial Park.
- A 50th anniversary re-dedication of the **Town of Lake Water Tower and Municipal Building** is still planned for this fall, but details remain to be worked out. St. Francis Alderman **Jerome Tylke** has offered his experienced assistance with the project. A separate mailing will inform members of finalized plans.

## BOARD DIRECTIONS

- Carl Baehr reported he attended the St. Francis Legislative Committee meeting on May 8 where the subject of establishing a Historic Preservation Ordinance was discussed. He also showed the board preservation material he has received from the State Historical Society. After discussion it was suggested by board members that Carl pursue the passage of such an ordinance.
- Ron Tessmer suggested pre-setting one day a month for cataloging at Thompson School from 1-9 p.m. The first session was scheduled for Wednesday, June 27th.
- Ron also reported that we were once again denied space in the library.

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

- **TOURS AND TRIPS — KATHY SCHWINGLE**  
Kathy reports that the next scheduled trip for our society is an overnight junket to the Manitowoc Maritime Museum on October 6th and 7th. The trip will include a

number of stops, including a tour of the historic Wade House in Greenbush, a stagecoach stop dating to the 1850's. The cost will be \$60.00 - this includes double hotel occupancy (2 persons per room), bus fare, and the admission fees to Wade House and the Maritime Museum. The trip will include stops at other historic Eastern Wisconsin sites. Manitowoc is rich in shipbuilding history, going back to the 19th century, when large-masted schooners roamed the Great Lakes. This is a great way to "Discover Wisconsin" - for registration details, call Kathy at 744-0873.

The carpool trip to historic Cedarburg on May 12th proved very interesting to a number of society members. A tour of the Cedarburg Woolen Mill included a walk-through of the Stone Mill Winery, a wine-tasting session, and a visit to the many antique and craft shops located within the mill.

### FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK . . .

Summer is here, and the warmer weather brings an opportunity to visit the many historic attractions in this wonderful state we live in. From the lush glacial areas of Old World Wisconsin to the beautiful Apostle Islands on Lake Superior; from the "Coulee Country" of the Mississippi River Valley near LaCrosse to the vineyards and inlet harbors of Door County - it's all here, and most within a day's drive or, in some instances, just a couple hours. Tours and Trips chairperson Kathy Schwingle is eager to set up tours during the months between April and October, such as the upcoming Manitowoc trip (October 6th - 7th), so you, our general members, should try to make it to one of these outings. Some of them are free of charge!! Railroad museums, a circus museum, historic homes and settlements, shipyards, wineries, nature tours, and so much more . . . why not take the plunge and get to know us better - we'd love to meet you! Call Kathy at 744-0873 for more info.

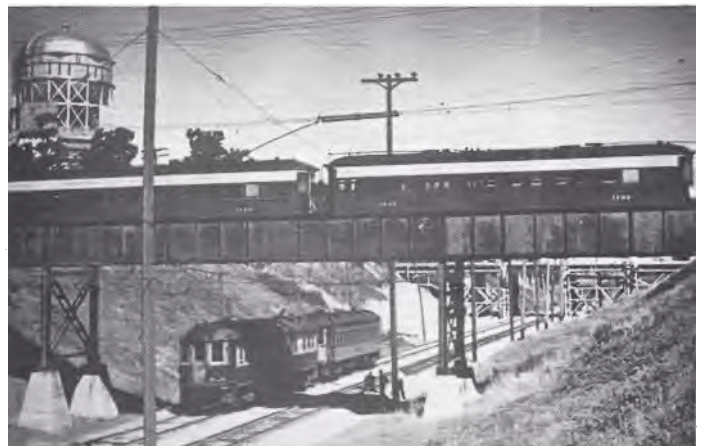
### HISTORY AROUND US . . .

- On August 25th the Waupun Historical Society hosts the East Central Regional Convention of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. Best known as the site of a state penitentiary, the convention program will offer visitors a look at other aspects of the community including its location on the edge of Horicon National Wildlife Refuge and the reason for its name "the city of statues" - one of the statues is the well known "The End of the Trail" by James Earl Fraser. The convention takes place at the Waupun City Hall.
- September 15th is the date for the Metropolitan Regional Convention of SHS of Wisconsin. It is both timely and poignant, given the events of the past year in Eastern Europe, that this year's convention be hosted by the Wisconsin Slovak Historical Society. Slovakia comprises the eastern portion of the country recently renamed the Czech and Slovak Federated Republic. It is an area of Eastern Europe which has enjoyed only brief moments of independence during the past 1000 years. During the last century and early part of this century a significant number of Slovaks settled in Wisconsin. The Wisconsin

### DO YOU REMEMBER . . . . . . WHEN ELECTRIC RAILS CRISSCROSSED TOWN OF LAKE?



*St. Francis Historical Society*



*Collection of Dave Prentice*



*Collection of Mark Meyer*

*For almost 80 years, from the 1890s to the 1970s, electric traction played an important part in the transportation needs of St. Francis and Town of Lake. The top photo shows the interurban cars of the South Milwaukee rapid transit line passing the St. Francis Post Office and Sacred Heart Church and School about 1915. The middle photo shows the intersection of the Lakeside Power Plant beltline (overpass) with the North Shore interurban line passing underneath in 1939. The construction of the Town of Lake Water Tower can be seen in the upper left of the photo. The bottom photo captures a pair of Route 11 "Tippecanoe" streetcars, in their last full day of service between Howard and Bolivar Avenues, at Howell and Waterford on March 29, 1947.*

Slovak Historical Society was organized in 1980 to preserve the heritage of Slovak immigrants and their descendants in Wisconsin. In 1987, the society was awarded the Reuben Gold Thwaites Trophy by SHS of Wisconsin. The **September 15th** convention will be held at **St. Stephen Martyr Church**, North 51st and West Hope Streets in **Milwaukee**. (Hope is two blocks north of Capitol Drive.) The convention will feature **Marty Perkins**, Curator of Interpretation at **Old World Wisconsin**, who will speak about how buildings are chosen, researched and moved to the outdoor museum in **Eagle**.

- Over 50 dealers are expected at the **Elmbrook Historical Society's 12th Annual Tailgate Antique Show and Sale** on Sunday, **August 12th** from 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at **Wirth Park, 2585 North Pilgrim Road**. Admission is \$2.00 with children free when accompanied by an adult. Proceeds go to the restoration of the 1850's **Dousman-Dunkel-Behling Inn**.
- Sunday, **August 19th** has been set aside for the **Oak Creek Historical Society's "Old Tyme Day,"** and will be held from noon until 5:00 p.m. at the society's museum complex, located at **Forest Hill and South 15th Avenues**. This year, vintage vehicles are being featured, and vintage car, truck, motorcycle and tractor owners are needed to exhibit their vehicles. If you or someone you know has a vehicle to display, contact President Gene Stark at **762-1077**.

## SOMETHING TO SMILE ABOUT . . .

Those who think revenge is sweet have never tasted love.



## 1990 DATES TO REMEMBER

- July 30th** . . . . . General Membership Meeting - 6:00 p.m.  
 St. Francis Community Center  
 Program: Dale Kuntz, "I Heard That Song Before"
- August 1st** . . . Board Meeting, Thompson School - 6:30 p.m.
- August 30th-September 2nd** . . . . . St. Francis Days  
 Memorial Park
- September 5, October 3rd** . . . . . Board Meetings  
 Thompson School - 6:30 p.m.
- October 29th** . . . . . General Membership Meeting - 6:00 p.m.  
 St. Francis Community Center  
 Program to be announced  
 (Board Meetings are also open to general members.)

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