

ST. FRANCIS HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

January 2002

This report was written by Sara Neubauer Kierzek, a former resident of St. Francis.

Native Americans called this area Nojoshing ("No-joe-shing"), meaning "land that extends into the water". Its land was desirable, because it was higher than the marshes of what would be downtown Milwaukee, and had rich, fertile soil. To native tribes such as the Potawatomi and Menomonee nations, the area was important to their rice crop, a food staple.

Although French fur traders visited the area in the late 1600's, the vast forests here made travel very difficult, except by canoe, so no permanent non-native settlement was established in the area until the mid 1800's, nearly 200 years later.

The names of the earliest settlers here mean little to most of us, aside from the streets that bear their names. Men like George Wentworth, Enoch Chase, Daniel Packard, Elijah Estes and James Howard settled here and farmed or started businesses.

One of the area's earliest businesses is still in operation today. The Trac Inn on St. Francis Avenue was founded by Martin Walker in 1839, just a few years after the very first settlers laid claim to land here, and was established as a way station for travelers between Milwaukee and Kenosha.

⁸⁴⁹ Ten years later, from Bavaria, came a small band of six women and four men, led by two Catholic priests, who were given the deed to 38 acres of land to establish a seminary for the education of German priests in America. ⁻¹⁸⁵⁶ The inspiration for this seminary came when the first Bishop of Milwaukee, Martin Henni, visited Annecy, France, the birthplace of St. Francis de Sales, so when the two priests broke ground for the seminary, it was named the St. Francis Seminary.

The area became part of the Town of Lake in 1840. And, despite enormous growth and several incorporation attempts, it remained a portion of the town for over 100 years.

(To be continued in the March Newsletter...)

Next Board of Directors meeting is Tuesday, February 5th. Everyone is welcome. Meetings are held at the Library - lower level- at 7:00 PM

Can you Help? We will be moving items from our garage to a semi trailer. Please call Jim Goodwin at 762-7805 for more information. No heavy lifting.

February, 7, 2002

Newsletter: St. Francis Historical Society
City of St. Francis
4230 South Nicholson Road
St. Francis, WI 53207

Newsletter Editor

I wish to correct a paragraph written erroneously about the history of the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi and published in the January 2002 Newsletter.

I will simply state the paragraph, as it should have read to be accurate.

Ten years later, in 1849, a small band of six women and five men arrived from Bavaria led by two Catholic priests, Francis Keppler and Mathias Steiger. Bringing their meager life savings with them, they purchased 38 acres of land in a forested area known as Nojoshing (now St. Francis). After two years both priests died of the cholera. The women, however, went on to develop a religious congregation known as the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi.

In 1856, Bishop Martin J. Henni, the first bishop of Milwaukee, hoping to build a seminary for German-speaking men, asked the sisters if they would help by assuming the domestic duties at the Seminary. They agreed, considering it a privilege to help young men attain their calling to become priests. The sisters served at the Seminary for over a hundred years. The Seminary was built on the property purchased by the group from Bavaria.

I would appreciate a published correction in your next newsletter. Thank you for your consideration.

I am enclosing a copy of a very brief history describing the early years of the Congregation's history.

Sincerely yours,

Sister Doris Pehowski, OSF

Sister Doris Pehowski, OSF

the Sisters
of St. Francis
of Assisi