

# ST. FRANCIS HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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*The following is taken from a report written by Kim Cummings entitled "St. Francis Street Names and Their History" (continued).*

Elijah Estes, his wife Zebiah Wentworth Estes, and three of their children are buried in Thompson Cemetery (Lake Protestant Cemetery). The origin of the family, in a sense, is the origin of St. Francis. The story is told by Daisy Estes Tucker, a great-granddaughter of Estes, in the book, "So You Will Know" which was compiled by Erwin F. Zillman, a Bay View civic leader (continued).

*"Every day Elijah searched the countryside for the ideal location for his farm. Most of the time his feet carried him to the high bluffs on the south shore of Lake Michigan. There, one evening at sunset, he realized that this was the land he had dreamed of many miles away on that hot plantation. The breeze from the white capped bay cooled his tanned cheeks. He stooped down and dug deep into the earth with his strong hands. The soil was rich and black. His thoughts skipped ahead to the large brick plantation home he wanted to build for Zebiah. Eagerly he paced off a half mile along the shore and put in his claim. His land grant amounted to 150 acres whose present boundaries would be the lake to the east, Nock Street to the north, St. Francis Seminary to the south, and the Chicago and Northwestern tracks to the west.*

*One morning after leaving the Chase's home, Elijah crossed the Milwaukee River at Walker's Point to a narrow slice of dry land. Surrounding this island was a sea of mud and weeds. A surveyor by the name of Edgerton was setting corner stakes in this muckland that was a playground for muskrats. Watching the surveyor was Solomon Juneau. Elijah introduced himself and asked about their project. The surveyor was skeptical. No humans would be foolish enough to build on a marsh. But Juneau was optimistic. So was Elijah. He was a man with a vision. Convinced that this would become a great community someday, he returned to Chase's home and wrote this letter to Zebiah.*

*"Mine own and beloved:*

*Your last prayer has kept ringing in my ears like music of comfort and my gloomy way was made bright. Three nights I had to fret away in sleep before I came to the marshes of Milwaky. It has rained all the time, cold and drizzling, but when I think of you the sunshine comes, and I forget I am chilled and hungry. Everything is alright now. I have just bought an ax, a blanket, some ground corn and bacon, of course on credit.*

*I will stay here until I get the cabin all ready for you. I will build it large with head space above and a trap door so that when I am working you*

*need have no fear of the Indians. The soil on the lakeside is very good and I think the new kinds of vegetables ought to thrive there. But we will have no truck garden before the home, nothing but flowers, tall flowers – zinnias, hollyhocks, and dahlias.*

*I am fearful that it might be hard for you at first, the change from comfort to almost Indian life, but I know that your love for me will bear you through. Fortune always smiles on those who love, and who loves more dearly that we do? I am thinking all the time of what you told me when you said farewell, and I am going to make the chips lie from this new ax to finish the cabin and come back to you.*

*If it had not been for you I would have gone back home to North Carolina as soon as I set foot in Chicago, although lame from my thousand mile walk. But when we met I know my fate was sealed and happily to labor for you in your northern land.*

*The days are lonely without you but I am coming for you soon.*

*Tenderly and affectionately,  
Elijah”*

*When Elijah finished the cabin in September of 1836, he returned to Fort Dearborn, married Zebiah, and brought her to Milwaukee. As their farm prospered and their family grew, Elijah drew up the plans for their dream home. It would be a 15-room brick mansion, the bricks being hauled from Chicago by ox team. It took ten years of waiting for the building materials and skilled workmen. And as there was little cash on hand, a span of horses was traded for the stone sills, acres of land were deeded for lumber and fixtures. Finally, in the 40's, the Mrs. Z. W. Estes subdivision was formed. Abstracts of title of all the houses built in this subdivision bear the Estes name and provide that 'no intoxicating liquors shall be sold on the property'.*

*In the completed mansion, were four fireplaces, many bedrooms, several high-ceiling parlors, an expansive dining room, and a big country kitchen. On the second floor in one of the drawing rooms was a large window facing the lake. One day, Zebiah, while entertaining neighbors in this room, pointed to the sparkling blue waters below and remarked about the lovely view of the bay. She suggested they name their new village Bay View. The women were delighted and the community was christened.*

*(To Be Continued...)*

## **St. Francis Historical Society (SFHS) Activities**

- A carpenter's tool chest was donated to our society by John Calteux. The chest belonged to Anton Calteux, who was born in 1824 and fought in our Civil War. He is buried in Sacred Heart of Jesus Cemetary in St. Francis. His wife, Catherina Brentener is buried in the Seminary Woods Cemetary, St. Francis. Anton Calteux apprenticed as a carpenter before coming to Wisconsin. It is not known if this tool chest was given to Anton by his relatives before leaving Luxembourg or if he acquired it as he worked as a carpenter at the St. Francis Seminary from 1886-1901. While Anton was working on the chapel in Henni Hall at the Seminary, the artist composing the stained glass window of the Holy Family used Anton as the model for St. Joseph. Some of the tools in this chest can be seen in the stained glass setting of the family.

We received a request from the Luxembourg American Cultural Society and Center (LACS) in Belgium, Wisconsin to display the tool chest at their Grand Opening. SFHS board members visited the center and agreed to the loan of the tool chest and a number of tools. President Bill Drehfal delivered the items to LACS where they are currently on display.

- We are in the process of moving our collection from the Lupo House to a room in Deer Creek School. A very large thank you to the St. Francis School Board for this long term temporary arrangement. We will be fundraising in the future for a permanent location for our collection.
- We're back! After a several-year absence, SFHS participated in the St. Francis Days Parade. A special hats-off to Jim Goodwin for his enthusiasm and help getting the parade unit ready. Thanks to other SFHS members who participated in the parade: Lois Neubauer, Kathy, Laura and Danny Matthew and Mandy Benter.
- St. Francis School Superintendent, Carol R. Topinka, invited the SFHS to participate in the Grand Opening of St. Francis High School which was held on October 1, 2010. We displayed many items from our collection representing former and current schools in St. Francis. Members who helped with the display were Bill and Mary Drehfal, Jim Goodwin, Lois Neubauer, Dennis and Carol Wojtecki, Terry and Diana Duffey and Kathy Matthew.
- SFHS members will attend the 2010 Local History and Historic Preservation Conference in Lake Geneva October 15-16. The annual conference is the largest event in Wisconsin for local historians and historic preservationists, and includes 34 sessions and workshops. We will be attending sessions which pertain to the future direction of the society.
- Special thanks to Dennis and Carol Wojtecki for their donation of a new printer/copier/scanner to the St. Francis Historical Society.