



# NOJOSHING

Indian word for "straight tongue"

land protrudes out into Lake Michigan like a straight tongue

Newsletter published quarterly

Non-Profit Organization 501c3

## December 2018

### A Crawford Christmas

By Karen Gersonde

I like Christmas. Always did! Always will! Christmas was always a special time of the year for me growing up. Maybe it meant being off of school for a week, which was a special treat when you were a kid. It was even better if you did not have homework or school projects to do over that time. That meant you had more time to play with your friends, go visit the relatives and play with your cousins, and stay overnight if you were lucky. It meant playing in the snow for a whole week, and going ice skating at Humboldt Part or sledding down a local hill, which for us meant the end of East Crawford Ave. We did not have to go far to make our own fun. It was a simpler time, a safer time, a time where you had fun right in your own neighborhood.

We did not have much growing up in St. Francis at Christmas time, but my dad, God rest his soul, always made sure we had a special Christmas. I think he loved Christmas as much as us children, and he did everything he could to make sure it was a magical time of the year for my brother and me. We always had a real Christmas tree. We did not have a lot of fancy ornaments but we did hang tinsel on it and a lot of big colorful lights, which usually burned out. Dad would then have to go to the hardware store to buy another string. They were pretty while they lasted, which wasn't long.

Our house was small so the tree took up our living room. That was ok, for the smell of balsam in the house was awesome. Truly magical! I used to think that is what the North Pole smelled liked, and Santa was so lucky to smell that year round. Also, my dad would pop popcorn for us to string

on the tree, so it did not look quite so bare. There was nothing like the smell of freshly popped popcorn in the house. The problem was I liked his popcorn so much, I think I ate more of it than I put on the string. Nevertheless, it was a fun family project to do, and tasty, too. Furthermore, my mother was talented at arts and crafts, so we made a lot of ornaments for the tree. Sometimes they were made out of paper, some were made from Styrofoam, or plastic or jar covers. She also



Karen Gierzycki Gersonde and Glen Gierzycki 1966

sewed some tiny ornaments for the tree, as she was an excellent seamstress. And don't forget the candy canes. Since they were inexpensive, we got to hang a few boxes of them on the tree. By the time we were done, it was the perfect tree, because it was decorated with a lot of love. And it was the perfect place for Santa to put all of our presents under, which was the most important thing!

I really liked Santa Claus. Oh, I believed in him so much that I could never get enough of seeing the big guy at the local malls during the holiday season. I would beg my parents to let me see him at Gimbels at Southgate and then, if I was real good, and they had enough time, I would get to visit him behind Southgate at Santa's Village. To me, that was as good as being at the North Pole. I would tell him all of the toys that I wanted for Christmas, of course all seen on TV, in hopes of maybe getting that one special toy from my list. And then you waited for that special day, Christmas morning, to see what Santa had



brought you. It was the highlight of the year, that truly one special magical morning where you couldn't wait to wake up and see what was under the tree. And Santa never did disappoint us. That one extra special toy was always there, waiting for you to tear off the pretty wrapping paper and claim it for you own! Jackpot! You scored! You couldn't

wait to tell your friends! Santa came, he really came! He stopped at our house! And we got brand new toys! What a treat, what a glorious treat!

The years may have marched on since those times, but those memories will always stay in my mind forever! There was nothing like a childhood Christmas, nothing like a Christmas on Crawford Avenue! Alas, there was one thing I never did get for Christmas, and as I got older, I realized why. I never got a pony! But it was a good call on Santa's part...I am allergic to animals! Good call Santa, good call! Merry Christmas to all!



Mary Bucci Billo, Karen Gierzycki Gersonde, and Glen Gierzycki 1966

## What's New?

### Welcome new Members

James Anderson and James Moroney

### Bake Sale

Our bake sale was a success. We earned \$1003 in sales and donations. Thanks to all who donated bakery.

### Doors Open

We had 60 visitors on Saturday and 20 on Sunday during September's Doors Open. Less on Sunday due to the Packer game.

### Christmas Dinner

Our Christmas dinner is on December 6 at 6:30 pm at Polonez Restaurant. Society member Skip Buechel is a rock collector and volunteers at the Milwaukee Public Museum. He will speak about his work and the geological history of Southeastern Wisconsin.

### Annual Meeting

Our Annual Meeting will be held on January 19. There will be an election of officers and board members. All are welcome and there will be refreshments. Robert Hallfeld will be doing a talk about the Harley Museum where he is a docent. To support local business the historical society has decided to eat lunch at a different restaurant after our meetings in January, April, July, and October. In January, we will eat lunch at Redbar on St. Francis Avenue. We invite everyone to join us at noon on January 19.

### Lake Protestant Cemetery

On September 29 at 2:00 pm, the Sons of Union Veterans, in full dress uniform, dedicated the gravestones of two Union veterans who are buried in our cemetery. The program was very impressive (especially the rifle salute at the end) and was well attended. After the ceremony everyone was invited to the civic center rotunda for refreshments---homemade pie, cake, and cookies. The pie went fast!!



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 or st.francishistoricalsociety@gmail.com.

# OUR HOLIDAY GIFT TO THE PLANET

## Understanding Life Before and After Plastic!

by Juliet Hills

It is a very interesting thought that so much of the last 50 years resulted in plastic that has been discarded into the landfill. I wondered about early settlers and what they used instead of all the processed materials we are used to. If we were to consider avoiding some of the plastic that has become typical, perhaps we could change the future of this beautiful landscape. Apparently it is not possible to buy shampoo in anything other than plastic, leaving the entire world with no other option. Of course, it is safer than glass in a tiled room with metal faucets, but it seems sad that we have no choice.

On checking around my house, I found plastic in pencil sharpeners, my iron (which isn't only iron any more), scotch tape, brushes and combs, the blender and hand mixer, yard netting, garbage bins, the refrigerator and ice trays, knitting needles, board games, camera, cushion foam, flower planters, and a variety of membership and bank cards. What did people use in the 19<sup>th</sup> century?

Might crockery and glass portion savers again become sufficient? The Waldorf Schools use only wool, cotton, wood, and beeswax for all their classroom

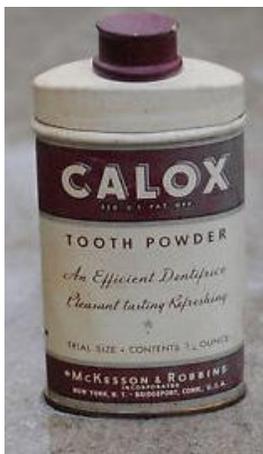
toys, yet most toys in stores are plastic and nylon.

What did our ancestors use for toothpaste? Did they make their own hand cream? (If you were a sheep farmer, you would have enough lanolin in your hands already!) I know my grandmother used cloth bags for shopping, and I remember all the brushes and brooms in the house were animal bristle and wood, some with leather or silver backing. Coffee was bought and stored as beans, and ground in a wooden and iron hand grinder. Tea was always loose leaves. For picnic ware, we sometimes used wooden plates, not perhaps the most hygienic, but also replaceable if they were broken, stained, lost, or the dog finished the leftovers.



Christmas decorations among the Germans were blown glass with feather tails on the birds that had tin clips for the tree, or embroidered balls and angels. Coasters for drinks could be serpentine or another workable stone, or clay. Recorded music was Bakelite but that may not be feasible any more. Fruit was not frozen but dried. Potatoes were cut and fried the same day, not stored in the freezer. And baskets were made of wicker or willow.

Cushions and pillows had feathers, pictures were framed behind glass, and buttons were horn, shell, or pottery. Buckets were tin, tool handles were sometimes bound with rope or leather, and glue was made from cow bones and in a glass dispenser with a flexible rubber stopper that had a slit to control the glue.



What a difference if we think twice about the things we buy at this time of year. Encouraging each other and the children to think about this is a gift in itself. All that can break down in nature includes wool, wood/paper, cotton, hemp, glass, rubber, and iron.

## The “Dinky” Line

by Glenn A. Gierzycki

Interest in the Lakeside Power Plant has been high this year with the unveiling of the historical plaque by the SFHS and the article by Karen Gersonde in a recent issue of “Nojoshing.” This article will provide some background information on the “Dinky” line that served the Lakeside Power Plant in St. Francis.

After the power plant was put in operation in 1921, there was a need to supply coal to the plant. At first, coal was delivered by lake ships that docked on the Kinnickinnic River. The coal was then transported over the existing local trolley lines at night (along Kinnickinnic Avenue) to a switch north of the intersection of S. Kinnickinnic Avenue and E. Norwich Avenue. Presumably at that time, the coal was transported to the plant on a rail line on a private right-of-way. This rail line was put in during the building of the plant to haul materials or was built after the plant was completed to carry the coal to the plant.

This method of transport was unsatisfactory and a better method was quickly found. A connection was made with the Chicago & North Western Ry. tracks in the vicinity of E. Norwich Avenue. A small yard of several tracks was constructed for the storage and interchange of loaded and empty coal cars. This yard was in back of today’s St. Francis Brewery and Restaurant and Wolf’s Cleaners and Laundry. A rail line was constructed from there to the power plant. The “Dinky” hauled the coal to the power plant. It should be mentioned that the “Dinky” was a small freight locomotive fed by electricity from overhead wires, which seems entirely appropriate for a power company. Several locomotives filled the role of the “Dinky” over the years.

This method of coal transport lasted for decades. In 1923, the company extended the rail line westward to the Milwaukee Road tracks near S. 13<sup>th</sup> Street and W. Waterford Avenue in Milwaukee. This allowed for a second source of coal. Unlike the original line to the power plant, which crossed Kinnickinnic Avenue at grade, the power company built a bridge over Kinnickinnic and Norwich avenues to carry the tracks to the west.

This method of getting coal to the plant lasted into the 1960’s. In 1969 the power plant switched to natural gas as fuel and the familiar coal piles behind Thompson School (torn down) disappeared. In 1970, a shortage of natural gas forced the company to temporarily use the rail line to get tank cars of fuel oil to the

plant. A portion of the line between the plant and Pennsylvania Avenue was sold to the Chicago & North Western Ry. and lasted a few more years (this was part of the line to the Milwaukee Road). The power plant shut down in September 1983.

Part of the history of the Lakeside Power Plant rail line was the trolley. Older citizens of our area may remember a trolley car sitting at Kinnickinnic Avenue waiting to take workers to the power plant. This interesting operation began about 1926 and acted as a shuttle to and from the plant. It began when few workers had private autos. Workers could take the regular trolley along Kinnickinnic Avenue from Milwaukee or Cudahy or South Milwaukee to St. Francis and then get on the power plant trolley shuttle. The shuttle saved a walk of almost a mile in both directions. This operation ended in May of 1961. It should be noted that S. Lake Drive in St. Francis never had any trolley service and the closest trolley line to the power plant was on Kinnickinnic.

There are other aspects of the electric railroad operation in St. Francis that might be of interest, but I’ll save those for perhaps another time.

I have included two very good references that report on the power plant rail operation in greater detail:

Barney, Chris and Sakar, Larry A., 2016, “Creating the Lakeside Belt Line: How the Lakeside Connecting Line was Upgraded and Extended” *First and Fastest Magazine*, Autumn, 2016, p. 49-55.

Canfield, Joseph M., 1972, TM, The Milwaukee Electric Railway & Light Company: *Central Electric Railfans’ Association Bulletin* 112, 593 p.



Courtesy Chris Barney

L-10 locomotive that pulled the coal cars, also known by some people as the “Dinky” (see page 5 about the Dinky “controversy.”)



**St. Francis Historical Society** created a poll.  
Published by Stephanie Maxwell [?] · October 9 at 9:15 AM · 🌐

Due to a controversy about the "Dinky" vehicle that had a connection with the Lakeside Power Plant, the historical society has decided to do a survey.

Vote on one of these statements:

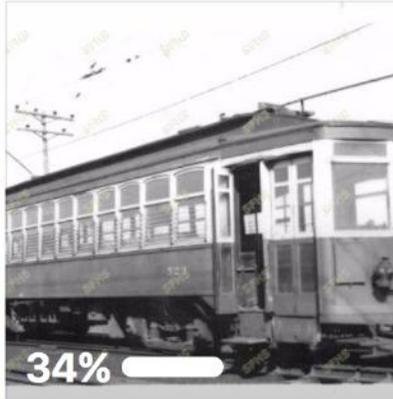
The Dinky was the L-10 locomotive (see photo #1) that hauled coal to the Lakeside Power Plant.

OR

The Dinky was the streetcar (see photo #2) that transported workers from Kinnickinnic Avenue to the Lakeside Power Plant on Lake Drive.



L-10 Locomotive



Streetcar

**Photos from the Civil War gravestones dedication  
September 29, 2018, at the Lake Protestant Cemetery**



**Top row, left to right:** Sons of the Union Veterans gun salute; Randy Borland, speaks about his great-great grandfather's William W. Thompson's war record; William Thompson's new stone was provided by the Veteran's Administration free of charge.  
**Middle row:** Bill Drehfal and Anna Passante take the role of veteran William Beal and Jane Beal; Attendees; William Beal's gravestone was provided by the Veteran's Administration free of charge.  
**Bottom photo:** The Sons of the Union Veterans gather around William Beal's new stone.

**Survey Results**

What was the Lakeside Power Plant Dinky?

Was it the L-10 that pulled the coal cars into the plant?

Or was it the streetcar that shuttled workers from Kinnickinnic Avenue to the plant?

Facebook survey results:  
66% say it was the L-10 locomotive that pulled the coal cars.  
34% say it was the streetcar that shuttled workers from Kinnickinnic Avenue to the power plant.

According to John Giove President and CEO of the Milwaukee Transit Archives & Museum, Inc. at 4763 S. Packard Avenue, Cudahy, it was the street car.

**What do you think?**

Contact us at 414-316-4391 or [st.francishistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:st.francishistoricalsociety@gmail.com) and we will include your remarks in the next newsletter.

## THE SEMINARY WOODS

### Part three of three

by Mark Hansen

The St. Francis Mission Compound was like a bit of Europe dropped into the Nojoshing Woods. In the 1860s and 70s, life at the seminary was very much like in the old country. German customs and practices prevailed. Baseball and football were not yet in vogue, and walking was the principal form of recreation — indulged in more or less by all.

There was a bowling-alley (nine-pins) out in the open, and it was said that when walking through the grounds one could hear the clamor and noise of the big ball, the rattle of the pins, and then a shout of victory: “Alle Neune!!!” They were playing the German game of “Hamburger.” The alley was not enclosed, just a roof over, and vines grew up the posts and somewhat screened it. It was located a little south of the Seminary. That location may be the same as seen in the colorized postcard---where a huge cottonwood spreads a canopy of shade over a rectangular depression that exists in the woods today.

Corpus Christi was a holy day of obligation and was one of the outstanding days on the calendar of the institutions. The preceding afternoon was a free day to prepare for the great feast. The Seminary Woods was suited as a perfect backdrop for this gala day. It was started in 1877 and attracted 1,500 faithful Catholics that year. Everybody entered into the real spirit and meaning of the day, and over the years all vied with one another to contribute their part toward making the procession a great success.

Father Gerend well remembered the Corpus Christi days at the seminary. He hoped that this pious practice of celebrating the day would never cease and that Heaven’s blessing would continue to rest on the St. Francis institutions and grounds.

“Everything had put on an air of festivity. The very bell, as it rang out the hour of service, seemed sweeter and more melodious on this bright June morning. Everywhere could be seen people of all ages, attired in Sunday array —now coming towards the Seminary. On the procession went amid boom of cannon and ringing of silvery bells, whilst clouds of incense from the many censers of altar boys, surrounded the baldachin over the Monstrance which contained the ‘God of nations’.”<sup>1</sup>

After the solemn High Mass, which was sung by the rector himself, the procession formed. It was led by a cross bearer and two acolytes, who were followed in this order:

First, the little orphans (about two hundred in number, and ranging in age from three to fifteen years), then the children from the institution for the deaf, then the students of the college and seminary (classical, normal and commercial), then the theologians in surplices, and priests in sacerdotal robes, and, at times also, the Archbishop.

This assemblage went through the woods and past the little chapel to make the full circuit through all the institutions, which lasted all morning until noon when the procession got disbanded.

You may happen to notice a solitary grotto standing below the cemetery. Its coming into existence was a big deal back then. A 1929 *Milwaukee Journal* clipping announced more than 800 delegates from Blessed Virgin Mary sodalities throughout the state would convene at St. Francis for the Corpus Christi Day. It was that day Father Gerend spoke on the



Colorized postcard written in German  
Postmarked to Berlin in 1919

history of this grotto. This affair started at 8:45 a.m. in the morning and by 3:15 p.m. the procession went to the Chapel of the Woods. He may have stood on the spot by the grotto and said something to this effect: The Our Lady of Lourdes Grotto was built by German born Paul Dobberstein while training at the seminary in 1894.

During his studies, Dobberstein contracted double pneumonia and promised the Blessed Virgin Mary that he would build a grotto in her honor, once he recovered. Standing a mere ten feet tall, this grotto was Dobberstein’s first attempt at a grotto building. He used the knowledge and skills gained during its

construction to build other grottos in Wisconsin and Iowa, including the massive Grotto of the Redemption found in West Bend, Iowa. It is believed to have inspired Mathias Wernerus (who also attended Saint Francis de Sales Seminary) to build the Dickeyville Grotto in Dickeyville, Wisconsin, in 1930, and that started the grotto building movement in America.

In most issues of the periodical *Our Young People* one finds a page or two of "Pupil Notes" coming from the deaf school. Most pupils lived full time during the academic year in the dormitories. So the notes may be akin to dropping home a few lines as "newsworthy" at school. With a quick skimming through, the reader duly notes the number one activity mentioned were the walks "through the woods." Typically, that was a seasonal activity occurring in the fall and spring. The school-wide activity for the month of October was called the "Holy Rosary" where the teaching Sisters take the pupils to say rosary at the little chapel. The month of May belongs to the Blessed Virgin Mary when making devotional visits regularly with the rosary at the little chapel were observed the same.

The last entry in *Our Young People*, in reference to the woods was made in 1959: "After a few years with the little ones, Sister Georgine (56 years total of service at St. John's from 1909 to 1965) spent some twenty years teaching boys only. Sister enjoyed telling of the nature study trips they made into the woods learning names of birds, trees, and flowers.

By then our American society had gone through a social revolution with the youth feeling disaffection for one reason or another. The most critical influence in shifting towards modernization occurred from the most unlikely place of all--the sweeping reforms of the two Vatican Councils. The once seemingly inexhaustible supply of priests and Sisters steeped in staid piety were greatly diminished in numbers. St. John's turned to hiring lay teachers to fill the vacancies left by those retiring Sisters. Don Bosco High School merged with Pio Nono High School in 1972 under the new name Thomas More High. In 1989, the school went co-ed due to lowering enrollment. In 2007 the school name changed to St. Thomas More.

The century-long practice of how the institutions looked upon the little chapel-in-the-woods, which helped sustain its purpose, thus far has faded into distant memory. The woods as a result has grown quiet without those attendant "watchdogs." That may have set up a "perfect storm" for the unholy war that followed.

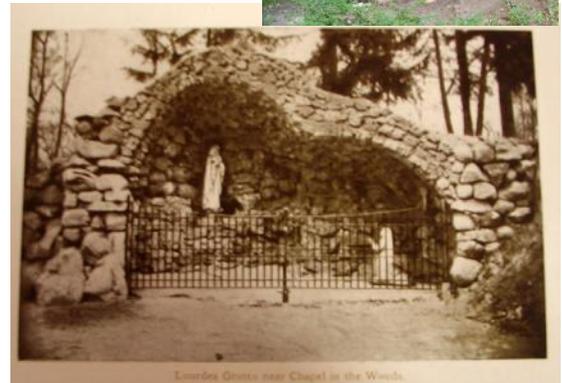
For those visitors who showed disrespect for "private property" and posed immature judgment by toppling and smashing to pieces the tombstones, yours truly wonders if the marker for the Rt. Rev. Monsignor Gerend was one of those smashed to pieces that simply could not be restored by the Archdiocese. Today, there is

nothing left to show for this holy man, who was made a domestic prelate in 1925 by Archbishop Messmer and the "gatekeeper extraordinaire" of St. Francis history.

Another dark element called Satan worshipping is suspected. There was a black cross that was burned on a white wall of the chapel. The chapel had not been used except by vandals, who used it a lot. Even the best effort by the maintenance staff to insert a boilerplate lock to discourage break-ins failed. Destruction and arson kept hacking away at its beauty inch by inch. Initials were burned into and written and swastikas painted on the chapel walls. The stained-glass windows that weren't broken were removed and secured into storage.

Sometime during the week of March 13, 1978, vandals again broke into the chapel and set the sanctuary altar afire. The watchman saw the little bonfire from outside and extinguished it in time. The decision came to a head right there to dismount the shrine for the good of the woods and the homes surrounding the woods. If the chapel ever started on fire at night, there was no way to get a fire truck in.

Any further repairs would have been too futile and too expensive, and likewise, it could not be salvaged. The St. Francis Historical society tried in vain to obtain \$15,000 from a private foundation. That was the amount needed. But the seminary officials would not allow it to be trucked out on a flatbed truck, because that would have meant removing too many trees along the winding road. What a shameful ending! The chapel was torn down on April 1978, board by board, and loaded onto a pickup truck to be hauled away and used for firewood. The vandals won out but surely not for their own conscience.





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

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**Newsletter**

Anna Passante  
Barbara Janiszewski

*Mark Your Calendar*

**Meetings:**

December 15, 2018 Board meeting  
January, 19, 2019 Annual meeting & elections  
February 16, 2019, Board Meeting

**Events:**

Christmas Dinner at the Polonez Restaurant (see page 2  
“What’s New” column)

*The historical society office (3400 E. Howard Avenue) is open most Thursday afternoons from 1:00 to 3:30. Please call Anna Passante at 414-482-1781 to confirm that we will be in the office.*

**Facebook:** St. Francis Historical Society

**Email:** st.francishistoricalsociety@gmail.com

**Address:** 3400 E. Howard Ave.

**Website:** stfranciswihistoricalsociety.org

**Phone:** 414-316-4391