



NOJOSHING

Indian word for "straight tongue"

land protrudes out into Lake Michigan like a straight tongue

Newsletter published quarterly

Non-Profit Organization 501c3

June 2019

Here She Comes: Miss St. Francis

By Barbara Janiszewski

In 1964, a community celebration was begun in St. Francis with a one-day event called St. Francis Day. At that time it was decided that St. Francis Day should have a queen, so the committee established a St. Francis Beauty Queen pageant. It was held the following year in September where contestants appear in street clothes, a one piece bathing suit, and formal wear and were to be judged on beauty, poise, and personality.

The first winner was Antoinette 'Toni' Grabske. The reason she entered the pageant was because she wanted to be able to say that she had been a competitor in the first Miss St. Francis Pageant. She never thought a tomboy like her would win. The prize was \$100, half of which she donated to St. John's School for the Deaf.

Today the Miss St. Francis Pageant gives away the top scholarship money in the state: \$3,000 to the winner and \$1,500 to the first runner-up. Each entrant receives a \$500 scholarship.

Miss St. Francis 1967, Pat Clark, entered because a friend wanted to enter but not without her. She said her sister told her that she wouldn't win but when she did, that same sister jumped up and down screaming, "I knew it, I knew she would win!"

In 1968, the Miss St. Francis Pageant became affiliated with the Miss Wisconsin Pageant and thus became an official Miss America preliminary. Judy Korpala won that year and became the first to represent the city in the Miss Wisconsin Pageant, and the first to place among the top five for the state title. She finished as second runner-up.

Miss St. Francis 1969, Susan Schroettner, also finished as second runner-up to Miss Wisconsin. She entered because she thought it would be fun.

Miss St. Francis 1980, Cheryl Maslowski, said one of her favorite moments was getting a police escort to the airport and boarding a private plane to take her to Oshkosh for the Miss Wisconsin Pageant. Before she left for Oshkosh, she was given a life-size bag of popcorn - and she ate it too!

In 1982, Mary Ellen George won and in 2017, her daughter, Kayla Knuth, won. This was the only time both a mother and daughter became Miss St. Francis.

Susan Jeske entered the pageant because her grandfather urged her to do so. He bought her first violin and was immensely proud of her. She remembers being duct taped into a borrowed evening gown, which was not well fitted.

In order to enter the contest, a contestant has to be between the ages of 17 (and a graduating senior) and 24. Each girl has to sell ads for the pageant booklet and sell tickets to the pageant.



Patricia Clark 1967



Mary Ellen George 1982

The winner appears at all city functions, as well as the senior dinner at Christmas and other events.

Money for the pageant is earned through bingo at the Lion's Center. Each sponsor of a contestant pays \$300.

Of course who can forget 1985? That was the year Mary Kay Anderson became Miss Wisconsin.

She said, "Winning the preliminary talent award was especially meaningful for me. At the time, I was

majoring in piano performance in college, yet I had tremendous stage fright when performing. I had worked very hard to tackle an extremely difficult piece, so winning the preliminary talent award was incredibly validating.

The moment I was announced Miss Wisconsin 1985, a large number of balloons dropped from the ceiling onstage. I was wearing a red gown with a

very full skirt. The crown was placed on my head and I took my walk down the runway

to wave to the crowd. I didn't realize that several of the balloons had gotten trapped under my skirt and were trailing out behind me as I walked....as I turned to head back to the risers to join the rest of the contestants, there was one lone balloon stuck under my skirt while I was walking. My elegant crowning moment was sabotaged by a horde of rogue balloons--and I had no idea at the time."

In 1996, Sherry Biedryczki was first runner-up. She had gained fame when at age 10, she sent then-Russian President Mikhail Gorbachev a song she wrote called "We Can Live in Peace."

Miss St. Francis 2000, Eileen Bergeron, said she remembers the things that happened back stage ---buttspray for swimsuits among others. At Miss Wisconsin she hid a happy face fan on stage just in case she won the Gladys Award, which she did and then she brought out the fan when they called her name.

In 1999, the pageant was honored by the Miss America Organization, as one of the top ten preliminary pageants in the country, for the awarding of scholarships to its contestants. Quite an honor!

This year we celebrated 55 years of the Miss St. Francis Pageant. We are grateful for the stories and experiences shared by past pageant winners as a part of St. Francis history.

Special thank you to Nancy Goltz for helping with this article.



Mary Kay Anderson 1985

What's New?

Welcome new Members:

Welcome new member: Julie Hughes

April Event:

On April 11, Carl Baehr gave a presentation on his book: "From the Emerald Isle to the Cream City."

This was a joint program with the South Milwaukee Historical Society. It was well attended.

May Event

Actress and reenactor Jessica Michna became Golda Meir on May 9 at the civic center. It was an excellent presentation and two people who attended went home and looked up Golda Meir because they didn't know much about her. That's a great result!

Last Chance:

The display case at the civic center is filled with memorabilia from the Soap Box Derbies that were held in St. Francis in the 70s. One of the soap boxes is also on display. It will be there until the 30th of May, so stop in to see it!

June 27 Wisconsin Historical Society

Listening meeting

Come hear about the Wisconsin Historical Society's plan for a new museum in Madison. Come with suggestions. June 27, 6:30-8 pm, at the St. Francis Civic Center.

Coming Up:

At our July 20 general meeting, board member Juliet Hills will talk about 10 women who were important to Milwaukee. After the meeting, as part of Operation Eat Local, we will have lunch at La Finca Coffeehouse at 3558 E. Sivyver Avenue (corner of Sivyver and Packard Avenue). If you can't make the meeting, join us there!



- 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.



Shipwreck Victims In Final Repose at Lake Protestant Cemetery

By Anna Passante

From canoes to schooners to paddle steamboats, for many decades the Great Lakes was the quickest means of transportation to settlements along Lake Michigan's coastline. Most immigrants to Wisconsin arrived by boat, but it was not without risk. They were as many as 5,000 shipwrecks on the Great Lakes. The result of many of these wrecks was drowning victims washing up on shore.

It was not uncommon for remains of victims to wash ashore after a week or more. Local carpenters built coffins, and if the remains had no means of identification, these shipwreck victims were usually buried close to the wreck site.

In 1855 and 1856, there were two instances where shipwreck victims washed ashore. Two female bodies washed up on the Lake Michigan beach a few miles south of Milwaukee on October 24 and 25, 1856. The first was the body of a young girl about age 10. She was found on the beach near the St. Francis De Sales Seminary at 3257 South Lake Drive, in what was then Town of Lake and is now the city of St. Francis. The second was the body of a woman about age 35, found on the beach just south of Oak Creek. It was speculated that they were shipwreck victims. The following year, in September 1856, the bodies of three crew members of the *Sebastopol* steamship washed ashore.

In the case of these two females, the Town of Lake Justice of the Peace Jared Thompson speculated that they were victims of the shipwreck Niagara that burned off the shore of Port Washington, Wisconsin, on September 19. Of the two, only one was identified. The young girl had a cotton handkerchief in her pocket with her name written on it with indelible ink. It read "Kate L. Haring." She was described in the newspaper as being "pretty well dressed; a calico dress, a black silk spencer [short jacket], cotton stockings, and pair of morocco shoes." The next day the body of the older female was discovered, but could not be identified. "The other body was that of a female, in a state of nudity, very much mangled and disfigured and no mark by which it could be described...35 or 40 years old. The bodies had been in the water a long time, as there was no hair on the head of either." Thompson buried them in the Lake Protestant Cemetery in the Town of Lake--- present-day city of St. Francis.

The Niagara Tragedy 1856

The Niagara was a mid-19th century side-wheel ship known as a luxury "Palace steamer." The ship featured stained glass domes, plush carpets, and parlors. Traveling from Collingwood, Ontario, to Chicago, it had nearly 300 passengers on the ill-fated trip.

The 1850 census records show that Kate Haring (born 1845) was residing on Mackinaw Island with her widowed mother, Martha, and eight siblings. Martha's late husband, Samuel Kip Haring, had been a customs officer on the island and had died of cholera in 1849. Martha opened up a hotel on the island (now the Stuart House Museum building) to support the family. The family was traveling on the Niagara, destined for Chicago, where Martha intended to open a hotel.

The ship stopped at Sheboygan and shortly after leaving the port, fire broke out just off the shore of Port Washington. The fire spread quickly and an eyewitness claimed “people dangled over the sides, clinging to the doomed vessel by ropes. The fire quickly burned through the hemp lines.” Another eyewitness described the scene as people hanging like trout on a line.

Lifeboats were launched but many capsized and resulted in many drowning. Estimates varied because the ship roster was burned, but approximately 60 people died. It is thought the cause of the fire was due to flammable cargo in the hold, although there were reports of arson.

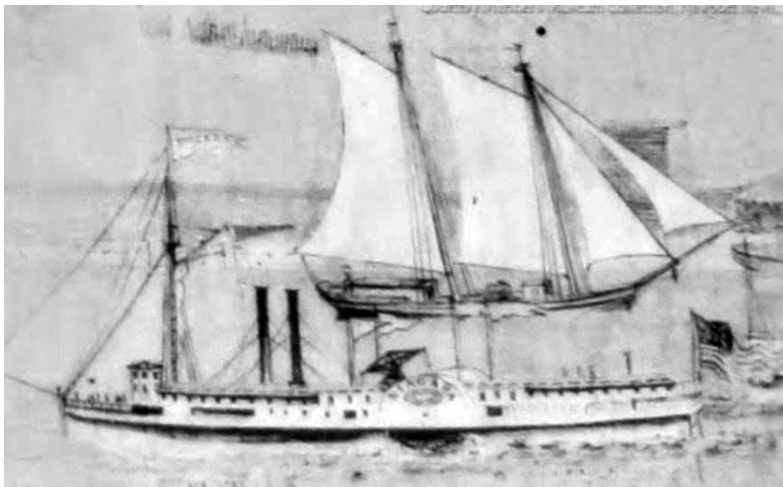
The steamer *Traveler* came to the rescue. The first mate of the *Traveler's* was Frederick Pabst, later a beer baron in Milwaukee. According to Pabst, the *Traveler* and the *Niagara* were docked together at the Sheboygan port. The *Traveler* left the port before the *Niagara*, and shortly after, he saw the *Niagara* on fire and told the engineer to head for the burning steamer. Pabst was in the first boat that was lowered, and he picked up an older man. At the windward side of the *Niagara*, he found the ship's captain and others who they took aboard. Pabst and his crew saved many lives that night.

A biographical article about Kate's brother, James Manning Haring of Ontonagon County, Michigan, confirms that Kate Haring was on the *Niagara*. The biography mentions that his sister Kate, as well as his six-year-old sister, Blanche, died in the *Niagara* disaster. It is not known if Kate's mother, Martha, was aware that her daughter was buried at Lake Protestant Cemetery in St. Francis. However, the *Detroit News* and the *Daily Cleveland Herald*, as well as other larger town newspapers, carried Kate's story. So perhaps Martha knew.

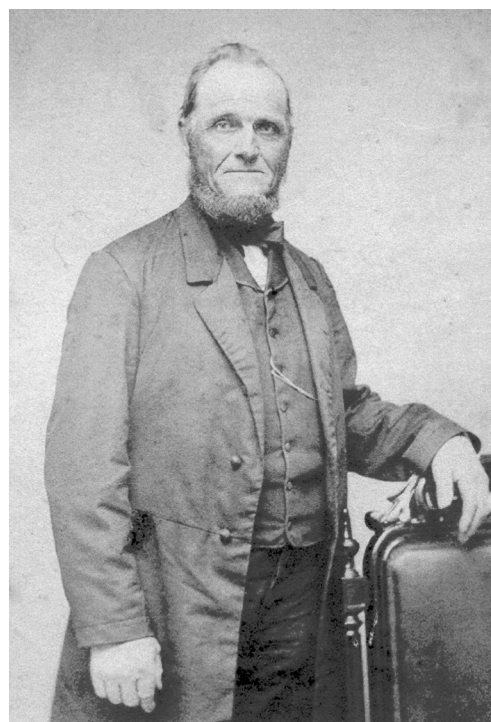
The Sebastopol Tragedy 1855

The year before Kate's body washed on shore, three male bodies were recovered from the shipwreck *Sebastopol* that ran aground near the St. Francis Seminary. All three were crewmembers who drowned when one of the lifeboats capsized.

Captain Thomas Webb piloted the *Sebastopol*. The ship left Buffalo, New York, on September 12, 1855, with a full crew and 60 passengers with 600 tons of cargo worth \$100,000 (\$2.8 million today). Seven days later, a leak was discovered in the hold during a powerful storm, and the ship sought shelter in the Milwaukee harbor. Several times the ship attempted to enter the harbor, but the great winds and rain kept the captain from identifying the harbor lights. The ship ran aground three miles south of the Milwaukee harbor and 200 feet from shore near the St. Francis De Sales Seminary. The wind and waves were too much for the ship. A smoke pipe fell and the stern broke apart. The cargo washed ashore and was strewn along the beach for several miles. A government lifeboat evacuated some of the crew and passengers, including Captain Webb's wife and four children. Seven or eight horses were saved. Some horses carried survivors to safety. Valued at \$1,000 each (\$20,000 today), more horses could have been saved if they hadn't been afraid to jump in the water.



The *Niagara* side-wheel Palace ship



Jared Thompson

The three drowned crewmembers were James Clark, wheelsman; Frank Forbes, 2nd engineer; and Morris Berry, 2nd Mate. Justice of the Peace Jared Thompson said in a news article, "I have had all three of the bodies taken to the Lake Protestant Cemetery and decently buried side by side."

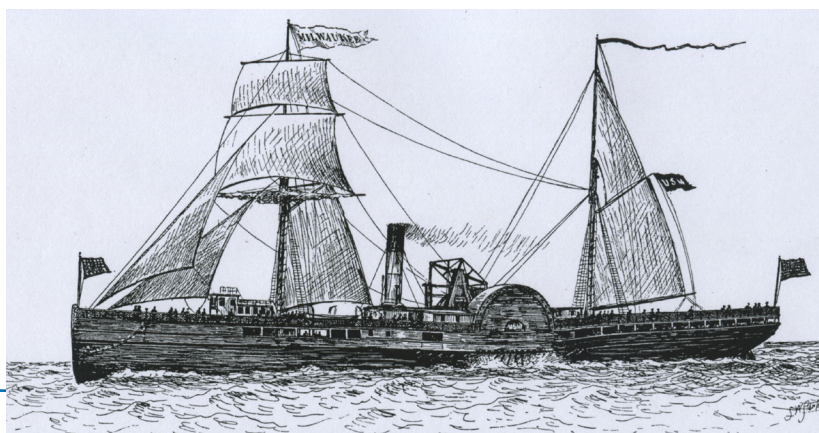
The Sebastopol still lies where it sunk in 10-15 feet of water inside the breakwater. In 1995, a divers organization explored the wreck and donated three artifacts---skeleton key, a flat iron, and a saw blade---to the St. Francis Historical Society.

Where are they buried in the cemetery?

Unfortunately, the St. Francis Historical Society has not been able to locate the cemetery burial records. So it is not known exactly where Kate, the unidentified woman, or the three sailors are buried in the cemetery. However, there is a clue. In 2017, the historical society hired Accurate Underground Verification to perform ground-penetrating radar to locate possible gravesites in the entire cemetery. Ground-penetrating radar (GPR) is a geophysical method that uses radar pulses to image the subsurface of the ground looking for disturbed earth with the appropriate length and width of a burial site.

The GPR found three graves side-by-side, three feet apart in a pathway, as well as two other graves side-by-side in this pathway. This pathway is on the western side of the grave lot owned by Justice of the Peace Jared Thompson. He and his family are buried in that lot. So perhaps instead of giving the shipwreck victims their own separate lot, Thompson decided to use this 6-foot pathway to give the victims a decent burial.

Could these be the graves of the three crewmembers, Kate, and the unidentified woman? We may never know, but may they rest in peace.



A steamship similiar to the Sebastopol

The historical society wishes to place a gravemarker in the pathway by Jared Thompson's family grave lot in memoriam of the five shipwreck victims buried there. The gravestone will list the ship names and the names of the victims.

Sebastopol

James Clark, wheelsman
Frank Forbes, 2nd engineer
Morris Berry, 3rd mate

Niagara

Kate T. Haring, Mackinac Island
Unidentified female

If you would like to donate to the cost of the stone, please send donations to the St. Francis Historical Society 3400 E. Howard Avenue, St. Francis, WI 53235

St. Francis Street Names and Their Origins

St. Francis Avenue has been known by other names:

- An old 1890s Milwaukee County directory recorded the street as “Broadway”
- A map from 1891 identifies the street as College Avenue, probably reflecting the Holy Family College that once stood on the present-day St. Thomas More High School property.

Morgan Avenue

- Morgan Avenue is the city of St. Francis’ northern border.
- Named by Winfield Morgan, a well-known real estate agent, for himself in 1892. Before 1892, the street was known as Ludlow.¹

Tesch Avenue

- Named for the Charles Tesch family who purchased the old Jared Thompson farm

Packard Avenue

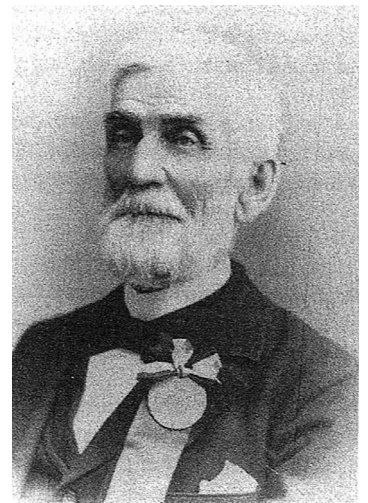
- Named for Daniel Packard (son of Zebedee). Daniel had his farm in present-day Cudahy at the southeast corner of Packard and Whittaker avenues. His house was razed in 1935.

Barland Avenue

- Once known as Axtell Road. Anyone familiar with Axtell as a possible surname?

Denton Avenue

- Denton Avenue west of Kinnickinnic Avenue was once known as Pleasant Street. (Anyone familiar with Denton as a possible surname?)



Daniel Packard

Next newsletter: What do Lipton, Hately, Kingan, Bottsford avenues have in common?

¹ From Carl Baehr’s book *Milwaukee Streets: The Stories Behind Their Names*, 1995.

City of St. Francis' Champion Tree

The following article was from the November 12, 1992, issue of the *St. Francis Reminder*.

Biggest tree in St. Francis

Wisconsin's biggest white ash tree stands in the backyard of Gail Jug, 3704 S. Kinnickinnic Avenue. Kim Gorene, urban forester with the Department of Natural Resources, found that out by measuring the tree. It is 82 feet tall, 158 inches around and has an 89 foot crown spread. It is believed to be 246 years old---a hundred years before the lay sisters and brothers came to St. Francis from Bavaria to start a Catholic mission. [The tree was there when Zebedee Packard bought the land from the U.S. government in 1839]

A tree in northern Wisconsin was formerly the oldest on file, but has since died.

The Jug tree's scientific name is *Faxinus Americana*. It was featured on *Outdoor Wisconsin* on WMVS-TV recently.



Photo of champion tree from *St. Francis Reminder* 11-12-1992

**The tree is no more.
It fell a decade or two
ago.**

Right, remains of the champion tree on Kinnickinnic Avenue as of 2019





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:

June 15, 2019, Board Meeting 9:30 am
July 20, 2019, General Meeting 9:30 am
August 17, 2019, Board Meeting 9:30 am

Upcoming events (see "What's New" for details)

Thursday, June 27--Wisconsin Historical Society listening session for the new museum in Madison

July 4--Independence celebration and parade

July 20, Saturday--Juliet Hills will speak about women in Milwaukee history

August 7 Wednesday, National Night Out

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.

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