



NOJOSHING

Indian word for "straight tongue"

land protrudes out into Lake Michigan like a straight tongue

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Non-Profit Organization 501c3

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Look What I Found

By Karen Gersonde

As I was cleaning out our old homestead in St. Francis, I came across a box filled with greeting cards. Yes, my mom saved everything from our childhood and would throw nothing away. I'm sure many of your parents did the same thing. So, intrigued by the box, I had to sit down and go through its contents. What I found was a piece of my past I had never seen before. A piece of my past I never knew existed.

I love old-fashioned greeting cards. It just seems like they were handed out in simpler times and meant so much to the people giving them, as much as to the people receiving them. Their cute little designs and sayings are timeless, classic, and a part of history that speaks to the times they were given in. I did a little research on greeting cards and came up with the following history.

The history of greeting cards dates back to the ancient Chinese who exchanged messages of goodwill to celebrate a New Year, and to the Egyptians who used papyrus scrolls to send greetings to loved ones. But it was in the 1400s that greeting cards began to be popular with the Europeans who sold and exchanged handmade greeting cards, especially for Valentine's Day. In 1775, the United States Congress appointed the first Post Master General. In the 1800s, Valentine's Day cards grew in popularity in the United States, with the first postage stamp being introduced in 1840. In 1856, German immigrant Louis Prang opened a small lithographic business near Boston and began America's greeting card industry. He is recognized as the father of the American Christmas card. By 1866, his color lithograph process surpassed the quality of other craftsmen in the United States and England. Hallmark and American Greetings are the two largest producers of greeting cards in the world today.



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As I went through my box of cards, I found many cards that were addressed to my brother in the 1950s and 1960s. I discovered his birth cards from our grandparents, cards from our aunts and uncles, and cards that were addressed to him from our cousins. My brother was one of the older kids in our bunch of cousins; hence he got more cards than I did. But I also had numerous cards in the box from all of our relatives.

It seemed that birthday cards, Christmas cards, and Valentine's Day cards were the most prevalent. I believe these are still the most sold, mailed, and given out cards today, for these special days. Oh, the graphics and images have changed over the years, but the sentiments in the cards are the same. I know I still like receiving cards in the mail. How about you?

Thanks to all who included a donation in their membership renewal

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What's New?

April Speaker: Mitchell Gallery of Flight

Bill Streicher, president of the Mitchell Gallery of Flight, will be presenting an overview of the museum, including the history of southeastern Wisconsin flight by decade from the 1920s to present. He will speak at 10 am on April 16 at the St. Francis Civic Center at 3400 E. Howard Avenue. Free. Hope to see you there!!

Are you interested in serving on the Education, Program/Publicity, or Hospitality committees?

If so, give us a call at 414-316-4391 or email st.francishistoricalsociety@gmail.com

Barbara Janiszewski Memorial Bench

The outdoor memorial bench will be placed in the park/children's area next to the library (4230 S. Nicholson Ave.). The dedication will take place at 11:00 am on June 4 with June 18 as a rain date. Refreshments will be served, including Barbara's favorites: peach pie, carrot cake, and ice cream.

Stay tuned for the following events.

All Society members will receive an invitation in the mail for the following events that will take place at the St. Francis Civic Center at 3400 E. Howard Avenue at 6:30 pm. Please mark your calendar.

September 15, 2022

John Gurda will present "Smokestacks on the lake front: a history of Milwaukee's south shore---the story of the industrial corridor from Bay View to Oak Creek"

October 20, 2022

Jessica Michna, an impressionist of historical notable women, will do a presentation for us. The woman she will portray is yet to be determined (there are so many interesting women to choose from). The character selection will be posted in our September newsletter but please save the date on your calendar. (Again, you will be receiving an invite in the mail.)

The Mystery of the Dumped Gravestone

by Anna Passante

The following article was published on September 4, 1986, in the Cudahy-St. Francis Reminder. It was written by Mary Becker who wrote a weekly historical column for the Reminder.

Old Tombstone Found

George Emerson still is resting in peace at Sacred Heart Cemetery [address], even though his tombstone was found a few blocks away on Aug.28.

Workers clearing brush from the railroad right of way at E. Crawford and S. Pennsylvania Avenues. found the headstone and notified St. Francis police. The two pieces of marble apparently were dumped there many years ago. The stone was inscribed "George Emerson, 1818-1883. Born in Ireland."

However, at Sacred Heart Cemetery, a new-looking stone is inscribed with George's name, plus the following:

- Harriet 1881-1912. (Quite likely George's wife.) [Editor's comment: yes it was]
- Elizabeth 1858-1898
- Mary Bradley, (1860-1900)

The original stone consisted of a head and foot piece, with a total weight of 1,000 pounds. Highway foreman Robert Javorek knows because his workers picked up the stone at police headquarters and transported it to their garage. It will be taken to Franklin [WI] by the city's refuse haulers.

"It's illegal to dump on railway property, but who knows who did it or when?" commented building inspector Raymond Calteux, who investigated.

An educated guess is that whoever installed the new tombstone was late for supper that night and deposited the old monument in the most convenient place when nobody was looking.

The incident recalls something that happened in Cudahy a few years ago. Rumors were circulating of an abandoned cemetery "somewhere on the south end of S. Packard Ave." Two women trudged through the snow one bitter cold afternoon. They made several stops before finally finding the "cemetery" behind a filling station just north of E. College Ave.

It was a pile of broken tombstones from Calvary Cemetery. All had apparently been replaced by new ones. The land behind the filling station was low and the stones provided a solid fill.



Look closely and you will see the engraving on the old Emerson stone.

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So, is the story about the abandoned cemetery on Packard Avenue just an urban myth?

by Anna Passante

A while ago there were some Facebook posts about a possible abandoned cemetery behind McDonalds on South Packard Avenue (hwy 32) in South Milwaukee. Later, I was talking to an employee of a large cemetery nearby, and he also mentioned an old, abandoned farm cemetery behind McDonalds in South Milwaukee. McDonalds is very close to the gas station on College Avenue that was mentioned in Becker's Cudahy/St. Francis Reminder article.

I made a trip over to McDonalds to check it out, but it was in spring and no snow!! There are large evergreen trees on the western border of the McDonalds property. Behind the trees is an open space. I was looking for broken gravestones but found none. So, perhaps the abandoned cemetery story from Facebook is connected to the "gas station story" Becker relates in her article. Perhaps now one can theorize that the story about an "abandoned cemetery" on Packard Avenue is just an urban myth.

Who was George Emerson?



It was said that George Emerson was a man of genial disposition. In other words, he was a friendly, cheerful man. Perhaps it was this trait that influenced Harriet Martin to accept Emerson's proposal of marriage. The couple married in Dublin in 1841, the city where Emerson was born in 1821. He had grown up in an old-fashioned brick building on Aungier Street. His home was directly across from the Sir John More residence, which was the birthplace of Sir Thomas More in 1779. Emerson was a mason by trade, and it was said that he directed the decoration of the interior of the former St. Peter's Church (now razed) on Aungier Street in Dublin.

George and Harriet had two children while living in Ireland: Thomas (born 1844) and Harriet (1846). In 1848, the family immigrated to America. The trip took three months, having been delayed at Liverpool, England, because of a shipwreck. They arrived in Boston in June 1848 and settled first in Buffalo, New York, living there for one year. They then traveled to Milwaukee and built a home on Virginia Street in Walker's Point.



By 1850, census records record that Emerson was in Town of Lake, living near Horace Chase. Horace Chase's land was a bit south of the former harbor mouth on Lake Michigan, which was just south of present-day Greenfield Avenue. Emerson owned Town of Lake real estate valued at \$150 and worked as a mason.

In 1856, the couple purchased twenty acres of land from the United States government in the old School Section (Section 16) on Clement Avenue, near East St. Francis Avenue. A school section was public land set apart in a surveyed township by the U.S. government for the maintenance of public schools. Towns could use the land for a school or sell the land with the proceeds going to the public school fund.

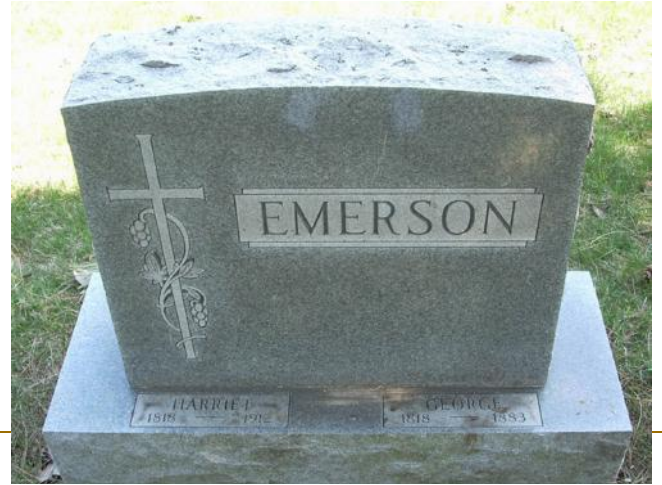
By the 1860 census, Emerson was listed as a farmer with assets of \$2,600. Seven more children were born to the couple: Margaret (born 1851), John (1854), Georgianna (1856), Elizabeth (1858), Mary (1860), Anna (1862), and Nora (1866).

Above: George Emerson and his wife Harriet

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In 1866, Emerson purchased adjacent acreage on Clement Avenue from a Gassen family member. The Emerson homestead is the present site of Clement Avenue School. Now part of Milwaukee, residents living there in the mid-1800s would have considered themselves part of the St. Francis neighborhood, since they lived within a mile of the St. Francis Train Station.

Emerson took up farming but was also listed as a “plasterer” in the 1870 census. He died in 1883 and his wife, Harriet, died in 1912. Both are buried at the Sacred of Heart of Jesus Parish Cemetery.



The new gravestone at Sacred Heart

City of St. Francis Christmas Parade December 2021



Left: St. Francis Christmas Parade December 2021 was a great success with a mild day for a parade. Participants representing the historical society are from left to right: Erica Drehfal, Bill Drehfal, and George Ramponi.

Below: George, with his bag of candy around his neck, is ready to throw sweets to the kids.



Historic Homes Razed But Not Forgotten

by Anna Passante

**A number of old houses in St. Francis have been razed over the years. Luckily, there are photos of them. Here are some that I know of.
If you have any others to contribute, call or email us.**



**Above: The Pipkorn farmhouse just before it was razed
Right: Wilhelmina Pipkorn**



The August Pipkorn house once sat at the site of the old city hall building at 4235 S. Nicholson Avenue. Originally part of Town of Lake, August Pipkorn farmed the surrounding land starting around 1868. Pipkorn was born in Poland in 1835 and immigrated with the family to the town of Granville, in northwest Milwaukee County, in 1839. August left Granville and moved to Town of Lake in the 1860s, serving as town constable in 1866. He had married Wilhelmina Tesch in 1865. August and Wilhelmina raised ten children on the farm. Pipkorn died in 1903 and Wilhelmina in 1913.

The City of St. Francis incorporated in 1951, but it took ten years to build a new city hall at the Pipkorn farm site. The new city hall, flanked by the fire and police departments, was dedicated in 1961. The Pipkorn farmhouse had to be removed, so the St. Francis Fire Department burned the building for fire training.



After their marriage in 1895, John and Ida Koenig lived at this home at 3814 South Kinnickinnic Avenue. John grew up in the Koenig family house at 3849 S. Packard Ave. (still standing). Ida's parents were Victor and Barbara Schuerbrock. They owned a tavern, built around 1865, at 3724 S. Kinnickinnic Ave., now occupied by Lovely Salon. At first, the family resided upstairs but later Scherbrock built the house to the north, 3704 S. Kinnickinnic Ave. (still standing). The City of St. Francis razed the John and Ida Koenig house at 3814 S. Kinnickinnic Ave. around 2018, and the empty lot is now for sale.

This house at 3737 S. Kinnickinnic Avenue in St. Francis was built by Jordan Puetz Sr. and his wife Elizabeth, on two acres of land in the 1870s. He had purchased the land in 1867. Jordan died in 1877 and Elizabeth in 1884. Both are buried at the Sacred Heart of Jesus Cemetery, only a stone's throw from their home.

Their children inherited the property. Daughter Catherine and her husband John Grobschmidt, lived in the house until 1910, at which time it was sold to John and Anna Frischman, who had emigrated from Austria. Frischman was a carpenter and cabinetmaker and built a workshop on the property. He built altars and other items for area churches. Their son Fritz, a long-time resident of St. Francis, was raised in the house. Family lore said that the house had been a school at one time, but that has not been substantiated. The house was later owned by Fritz's sister, but due to lack of maintenance, the house was razed in the 1990s. It is now an empty lot.



Jordan Puetz house at 3737 South Kinnickinnic Ave.

Some St. Francis residents may remember when there was a greenhouse business at the northeast corner of Kinnickinnic and Norwich avenues. There was a house on the property addressed 3018 East Norwich.

The house was originally the home of the Herman Schwan family. He had purchased the property in 1903. Herman had married Bertha Faehnal in 1893 and had four children. His truck/market farm on the property was different from regular farming. Market gardens grew various kinds of vegetables for the smaller market versus regular farmers who planted one or two large grain crops and sold their produce to produce brokers at Milwaukee's downtown commission houses.

Arnold and Dorothy Baewer bought the property in 1939 and ran a greenhouse from that location.

Around 2011, the house was to be razed, so the fire department burned the house for fire training.

In 1903, Herman's 13 day-old-daughter was buried in Lake Protestant Cemetery, across the street from the family home. Wilhemine Faehnel, Herman's mother-in-law, is buried next to Hilegard in the cemetery.



Above: The Schwan/Baewer house was used for fire fighting training.

Right: Arnold Baewer



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

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Newsletter

Anna Passante

Mark Your Calendar

Meetings at the St. Francis Civic Center at 3400 E. Howard Ave.:

The monthly board meetings are the 3rd Saturday of the month at 9:30 a.m. Visitors welcomed.

March 18, 2022

April 16, 2022

May 21, 2022

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

Facebook: St. Francis Historical Society

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