

'NOJOSHING'

The official Newsletter of the St. Francis Historical Society

SPRING 1993

4235 South Nicholson Avenue
St. Francis, Wisconsin 53207
(414) 481-2300

1993 OFFICERS

President.....Jim Goodwin
Vice President.....Ron Tessmer
Secretary.....Ed Wagner
Treasurer.....Marge
Symkowski

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NEW MEETING SITE SELECTED FOR GENERAL MEETINGS April 26th.

The general meeting for 1993 will be held in the lower meeting rooms at the St Francis Public Library 4224 S Nicholson Ave. The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, April 26 1993 and will begin at 7:00 P.M. The Lupo Property will be the main topic of discussion.

Now that we have it what needs to be done?
What will be displayed? What do the buildings look like?
How will it be promoted? Are there going to be any special events?
How can I help? Bring you questions to this meeting it will be a very interesting session.

Refreshments and cakes will be served.

JIM GOODWIN ELECTED NEW SOCIETY PRESIDENT

Election of officers were held at the Society's Board of Directors Meeting Held at the home of Ron and Marge Tessmer on March 2, 1993

Ron Tessmer nominated Jim Goodwin for President and he was elected by an unanimous vote. Jim has been a member of the society for the past four years and was elected director two year ago. Jim along with his wife Dolores has taken an active interest in the society's program.

Other officer elected are as follows:

Vice President: Ron Tessmer
Secretary: Ed Wagner
Treasurer: Marge
Symkowski

A MESSAGE FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

My Name is Jim Goodwin- your new president of the St. Francis Historical Society. I am proud to work with you for the coming year.

Our next General Meeting is set for Monday April 26, 1993 at 7:00 PM at the St Francis Library.

Now that we have a home for our

historical items, we need new members, new ideas, and help. If we work together our St. Francis Historical Society can be one of the best in the region.

Please come to our next General Meeting on April 26th and meet old and new friends. We will work on plans for the coming year for our Society.

God Bless and Good Health

Jim Goodwin, President

P.S. Come with a head full of ideas because without you- we

we have no Society.
(Thanks)

SOCIETY AND CITY AGREE ON TERMS FOR LEASING LUPO PROPERTY

Culminating a broad ranging effort lasting over two years the St. Francis Historical Society voted to accept the agreement worked out with the City of St. Francis for the property located to the north of St. Francis Memorial Park commonly know as the Lupo Property. The official address of this property is 4166 S Packard Avenue, St. Francis Wi 53207

The agreement between the City and the Society is a ten year renewable lease granting the Society full and exclusive use of the property which includes the house and two out buildings. Along with the property the Society will assume the responsibility of day to day maintenance, the payment of utilities and the

general maintenance of the property's appearance. The City on the other hand will take care of the snow and ice removal, grass cutting and major maintenance.

A committee has been established to determine the best use of the property and its out building. If you have any ideas or would like to assist on this committee please call president Jim Goodwin.

MILWAUKEE HISTORICAL SOCIETY TO DISPLAY VICTORIAN TABLE DECORATIONS

Selected from the society's collection, a number of tabletop displays of imitation flowers, stuffed animals, birds or miniature figures covered by a glass dome, which were among the popular forms of decorations in the late 19th century living rooms or parlors, are now on display at the Milwaukee Historical Center.

Known in the Victorian Era as "shades" because of their glass coverings, many were designed to be seen from all sides and could stand on a table in the middle of a room or on top of a mantlepiece. The arrangements were often extremely ornate and a variety of media were used to form these scenes, including fabric, shells, seed, nuts, wax, glass and feathers. Was figures under glass were especially popular.

One item of particular interest is a "Putti" or cherub-like display made of wax, extremely delicate and filled with immense detail which reflects representations of children.

This composition illustrates one of the ingenious methods used in the late 19th century to reproduce flowers and leaves.

WARD THEATRE DESIGNATED AN ENDANGERED HISTORIC PROPERTY

The Ward Memorial Theatre on the grounds of Milwaukee's Zablocki VA Medical Center has been designated one of Wisconsin's Ten Most Endangered Historic Properties. The announcement was made on February 11 in the State Capitol by the Wisconsin Trust for Historic Preservation.

The Ward Theatre was built in 1881 as part of Milwaukee's Soldiers Home, one of the nation's three original Homes for disabled veterans after the Civil War. The theatre first as a recreation hall, chapel and temporary barracks before being converted into a theatre with stage, balcony and box seats in 1895. It is not only Wisconsin's oldest theatre but has been called "the last and the best of the Victorian Era theatres" The theatre is named for Horatio Ward, a British banker and philanthropist who donated part of the funding for the original building. The theatre is historically valuable for a variety of reasons. It was designated by prominent architect Henry Koch as an all-American theatre rather than imitating the style of European opera houses. Part of its warmth and charm lies in the simplicity of its lines and the extensive use of natural wood and Tiffany glass. Unlike most older theatres which have undergone extensive remodeling and modernization, the Ward has

remained virtually unchanged since 1895. From the turn of the century through the 1930's the theatre hosted the great performers of the American stage such as Will Rogers, Eddie Foy, Bob Hope, Bert Wheeler and Sophie Tucker.

To be designated an endangered historic property a building must be on the National Registry of Historic Places and be in danger of being lost by intent or neglect. The Ward theatre was originally slated for razing in the 1930's when the VA planned to build a more modern facility. The advent of World War II put that plan on hold. After the new hospital complex was built on National Avenue the theatre stood idle except for occasional use by community groups.

In 1981 the Milwaukee Players Community Theatre was invited to occupy the theatre as an office and rehearsal facility as part of a plan to eventually designate the facility a community arts center. A Foundation Board was also created to raise money and oversee the preservation of the theatre and several other Civil War Era buildings in the Soldiers Home District. In the mid 1980's the VA undertook a number of maintenance and safety measures to keep the interior usable. Numerous community performing groups and small professional companies have expressed interest in using the theatre once it is restored. When community funding was not forthcoming to begin preservation and restoration measures, the VA closed the theatre in August 1992.

The Ward theatre is designated as endangered because it is not in use, there is currently no preservation plan, and the VA is only maintaining the exterior. The theatre was nominated to the Wisconsin Trust for Historic Preservation list by Senator Brian Burke and the Friends of Restoring the Ward Theatre, ForWARD Inc. ForWARD Inc is a non-profit charitable organization of concerned citizens who conduct public awareness events and who advocate on behalf of the theatre and other historic Soldiers Home buildings. Further information can be obtained from ForWARD, Inc P.O. Box 1811, Milwaukee, Wi 53291-1811

The Theatre's imposing exterior is Victorian Gothic made of cream city brick and surrounded on three sides by spacious verandahs. It sits on a wooded hillside overlooking sweeping lawns and a small lake. A line of the Milwaukee Road runs behind the theatre which at one time also contained a store, restaurant and a waiting room to serve travelers. The railroad ticket office can still be seen on the west verandah. The theatre's east facade has a magnificent stained glass portrait of General Ulysses S. Grant on his favorite horse, Cincinnatus, and is lighted at night. The portrait was a gift of the 1883 encampment of the Grand Army of the Potomac and was installed in 1887. the theatre is located on the hill behind Milwaukee County Stadium and can be reached by entering the VA Medical Center from National Avenue or via I94.

THE NAMING OF THE CITY OF ST FRANCIS

by Carl Baehr

We sometimes think of the city of St Francis as being the South Shore's new kid on the block, since it didn't become a city until after Bay View, Cudahy, and South Milwaukee were founded. But the name St. Francis showed up on the map before any of them.

Before being called St. Francis though, the area was called Nojoshing. It was still known by that name as late as 1868, when the St. Francis Seminary's address was listed as nojoshing in a directory of Catholic dioceses in the United States. Nojoshing is an English language rendering of an Indian term. To the area Indians, Nojoshing was the name of the south end of Milwaukee Bay, a more concise way of saying "the place where the land extends into the water".

The area was called Southpoint for a short time after the Civil War, a label that was not nearly as long-lasting as its Northpoint counterpart.

The idea of the name St. Francis of the seminary can be traced back to 1845, when John Henni, in a letter, discussed his Milwaukee seminary, "which I have placed under the patronage of St. Francis de Sales". An event in 1848 assured the naming. Henni, Milwaukee's first Catholic bishop and a German, went to Europe to raise money for the building in his diocese, including construction of the seminary at Nojoshing. While in Europe, Henni was visiting the St Francis' birthplace in

Annecy, Savoy (now part of Switzerland). He was unexpectedly presented with relics of the saint: that omen settled the matter.

St. Francis Seminary began showing up on Milwaukee County maps after it was dedicated in 1856. Following the Civil War, the seminary's enrollment increased dramatically, requiring increased services. In January of 1867, its students signed a petition to have a United States Post Office located there. Their wish was granted and St Francis became a postal address.

That same winter there was a second development, the establishment of a railroad station. The clergy of the seminary requested that the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad place a station at its junction with St. Francis Avenue; the street leading to the seminary. The new St. Francis Railroad Station was listed on railroad schedules and the community's identity was clearly established.

By 1890, businesses in the area, like Hayden Thompson's St. Francis Nurseries, were using the name. Newspaper reports were referring to the area as St. Francis. In the 1890's, the Milwaukee Sentinel included St. Francis, along with Wauwatosa, Whitefish Bay, Bay View and others, in its "News from the Suburbs" column. St. Francis Heights, Vill St. Francis, and South St. Francis were new subdivisions that showed up in advertisements and on plot maps during a development boom of the late 1880's and early 1890's. Town of Lake directories during the

1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, had listings under the village of St. Francis.

When the name was officially selected for the city in 1951, the St. Francis name was kept alive as the oldest of the South Shore Communities



St. Francis Historical Society

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