

# NOJOSHING

Indian word for "straight tongue"

Land protrudes out into Lake Michigan like a straight tongue

## The Newsletter of the St. Francis Historical Society December 2014



**St. Francis**  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Email: [st.francishistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:st.francishistoricalsociety@gmail.com)

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### Newsletter

Anna Passante  
Barbara Janiszewski

### Do You Remember? Ola's Supermarket *by Barbara Janiszewski*

Otis Weinhold Sr. was a man with big ideas. He told his wife Ola that some day he would put her name up in lights. He was just waiting for a good opportunity.

Visiting Chicago, Otis saw a custard stand and thought that would be something that would be good for the St. Francis area as there was nothing like that around here. He opened Ola's Custard Stand on Packard Avenue, where the Polonez is now located. It included a small convenience store that sold milk and eggs and other necessary items. This was in the 1940s.

In 1951 the family sent son Ken to school in St. Louis to learn how to cut meat and soon after the custard stand was expanded into a full-scale grocery store. Ken managed the meat department and son Otis Jr. (aka Bill) managed the rest of the store. Ola's was known for their quality meats and many people from

the surrounding area shopped there. Consequently, the store became too small and as there was a vacant lot across the street, and with the urging of their food distributors, a new and larger Ola's Supermarket was built.

When it opened in 1961 an ad in the local newspaper stated:

Our Dream: To keep friends, to continue our high quality, to keep our low prices, to continue our personal service, to keep growing with our community, to continue to deserve your patronage

Our Aim: To build under one roof, a complete meat and grocery firm that would have all the warmth and wonderful friendliness of the corner grocery combined with the size, convenience and economy that only the large super market can offer

And You: We humbly request that you critically appraise our new store to determine if our dream has become a reality

The Weinhold family was very active in the community. Bill was a founding member of the St. Francis Lions Club and was on the St. Francis Fire and Police commission. Ken was involved in the committee to build the St. Francis Library and also served on the library board. The Rotary Club of Mitchell Field named Ken "St. Francis Father of the Year." Ola's employed many high school students and other residents of St. Francis to work in the store.

For many years in the late summer Ola's held what were called "Circus Days." There were clowns, hot dogs for sale, popcorn and circus peanuts were free, kids played carnival games, and employees dressed up in circus costumes.

On a negative note, Ola's was robbed three times. The first was in May 1964, when the thieves forced the front door open and brought in a blowtorch in order to get the safe open. It was thought that more

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than one man was involved because of the weight of the blowtorch and the other equipment. About \$12,000 in cash and checks was taken. In 1964 that was a lot of money!

In the second robbery an employee, who was sweeping the floor, was forced to open the cash box at gunpoint. Of course the employee turned over the money.

The third time the robber gained entrance by forcing open a vent in the meat department. That time the entire safe was taken. The safe was later recovered in Lake Michigan with a large hole in its side.

A fourth attempt failed. A hole was cut into one of the windows at the front of the store. However, a soda machine was on the other side of the window and the thieves couldn't budge it so there was no entry.

In the early 1990's many big box supermarkets were being built in the area and unfortunately the store couldn't compete. Sadly, Ola's closed. Ola passed away in 1975, Ken in 1994, and Bill in 2014.

Ola's was not just a grocery store. For the people of St. Francis it was a place you would go and inevitably see someone that you knew. It was run by a family that brought leadership and showed commitment to the community. For these reasons we thank the Weinhold family for their years of service in St. Francis, and especially to Otis Weinhold Sr. for following through on a big idea and keeping that long ago promise to his wife Ola to "to put her name up in lights."

### **Dedication of the Civic Center / Society Event**

The dedication of the new civic center took place on Sunday, Oct. 26, 2014. Native American dancer Ron Preston performed, guest speakers addressed nearly 300 people, and presentations by the mayor were made. Employees of the fire, police, and city administration lead tours of their quarters, and the historical society docents fielded questions about the eight display cabinets in the rotunda.

On Thursday evening, Nov. 12, the historical society hosted an event for members and interested parties. It was a grand success with 130 people attending. Board member Sister Ceil performed the invocation, Society President Bill Drehfal presented awards to a number of former board members for their past service. Author Anna Passante did a power-point presentation about her new book about the history of St. Francis.

### **What's New?**

#### **Welcome new members**

Fritz and Marge Frischmann, Carol Maudie, Barb Perszyk, Sheryl & Elizabeth Stawski, Joel and Mary Papa, Donald & Jackie Brickner, James Ganey, Amy Krahn, Karen Calteux Michalski, Kathy Stilin, Michelle Passante, Karen Gersonde, Glenn Gierzycki, Robert and Tami Passante, and John Janiszewski.

#### **Correction**

Phil Raphael was the person who came up with the idea to name the new trail "Nojoshing Trail." It was reported in the last issue that Terry Duffey had suggested the name.

#### **Membership Renewal**

Your 2015 membership is due in January.

#### **Gift Idea**

Wondering what to give your kids for Christmas? How about a gift membership in the St. Francis Historical Society?

#### **Civic Center**

We are now ensconced in the Civic Center and our future meetings will be held there. Our display cases are finished and have received many favorable comments. Our workroom has a large display window. Check us out!!

#### **Annual Meeting**

Our annual membership meeting will be held on January 17 at the Civic Center. There will be a speaker and refreshments.

#### **Facebook**

Like us on Facebook: St. Francis Historical Society. See pictures of the display cases in the Civic Center.

#### **Another Christmas gift idea**

Copies of our new book, *From Nojoshing to St. Francis, From Settlement to City* are available at [st.francishistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:st.francishistoricalsociety@gmail.com) or call 414-316-4391. Or buy it online at Amazon.com and Half.com. All proceeds go to the historical society.

#### **Wish list**

Do you have a record player that plays 78 rpm that you would donate to the Society? Call 414-316-4391

# DONATION NIGHT

Tuesday, Dec 16 4-8 pm



10% OF SALES WILL BE DONATED TO

**St. Francis  
Historical Society**

St. Francis • 3058 E. Layton Ave. • Ph 414-481-8700

[COUSINSSUBS.COM](http://COUSINSSUBS.COM)



Please mark your calendars and support the St. Francis Historical Society by purchasing food at Cousins Subs 3058 E. Layton Avenue on Tuesday, December 16 from 4-8 pm. During that time period, 10% of all profits will go to the Society. Tell your friends and relatives to help support the historical society. Do you live out of town and can't stop by Cousins? Call friends and relatives and ask them to be your personal representative and purchase food at Cousins.



# Milwaukee's Christmas Tree Ship

by Anna Passante

In the early 1900s ships sailed Lake Michigan hauling Christmas trees from Michigan ports to coastal cities in southeastern Wisconsin and northern Illinois. Christmas tree lots were set up at the docks and the trees were sold to area residents, excitedly performing their annual ritual of picking out the perfect Christmas tree.

The best known of the Lake Michigan Christmas tree ships was the *Rouse Simmons*, which sold its trees at a dock in Chicago. On Nov. 12, 1912, under threatening gray skies, Captain Herman Schuenemann, left the Thompson Harbor near Manistique, Mich., loaded with 3,000 to 5,000 Christmas trees. During a violent storm the ship was lost northeast of Two Rivers, Wis., and the entire crew of 16 perished. The wreckage, including the Christmas trees, was washed up on shore at Pentwater, Mich.

Milwaukee had its own Christmas tree ships in the 1920s and 1930s owned by Captain William J. Lawrie who resided in the Bay View neighborhood at 2602 S. Shore Dr. He came from a family of "lakefarers." His father was a boating enthusiast, and his grandfather, William Barr, was a shipbuilder.

Lawrie purchased his first commercial vessel, the *Lois Pearl*, in 1924. It was named for Lawrie's daughter, Lois, and his partner's daughter, Pearl Jones. The 65-foot vessel, docked at the foot of E. Nock Street, was used for excursions in summer. The *Lois Pearl* ran between the South Shore dock and Juneau Park in downtown Milwaukee, carrying as many as 125 passengers. In fall, it hauled apples and potatoes, and in November up to 6,500 Christmas trees from Michigan.

The Christmas trees were sold below the Kinnickinnic St. Bridge (just north of Becher St.). The tree lot was set up on the dock along the river. Large numbers of people busily picked through the balsam and spruce trees on the cold winter days.

Christmas of 1929 almost didn't see trees sold at the foot of the Kinnickinnic Bridge. That winter the *Lois Pearl*, loaded with spruce trees from Fayette, Michigan, became frozen in the ice in upper Green Bay. Fortunately, the ice cutter, *Faithful*, of Two Rivers came to the rescue, freeing the vessel from the ice. Another time, a field of ice in Sturgeon Bay crushed planking on the *Lois Pearl* causing her to go down in 12 feet of water. She was quickly raised for repairs and eventually returned to Milwaukee with a full cargo of Christmas trees.

In 1930, Lawrie acquired the 65-foot vessel the *North Shore*. In September of that year, the *North Shore* headed for Milwaukee loaded with 3,000 baskets of grapes. It went down during a storm, and all six people on board, including the captain and his new bride, perished. To replace the *North Shore*, the *North Shore II* was built in 1931. It was a double-deck design and carried 250 passengers.

Another of Lawrie's Christmas tree ships was the *South Shore*, a small wooden freighter. Originally known as the *Ora Endress*, it too served as an excursion vessel in the summer, hauled freight in the fall, and Christmas trees in winter. Unfortunately, while hauling a load of potatoes in Nov. 1932, the *South Shore* went down in a devastating storm. The vessel and bags of potatoes were found washed ashore near Frankfort, Mich. The entire crew of four perished.

Lawrie's association with hauling passengers and freight came to an end in the mid-1930s. The *Lois Pearl* sank in 1935 at the Kilbourn St. Bridge in Milwaukee and that became her final resting place. The *North Shore II* was sold in 1936 to the Washington Island Ferry Line in Door County and is still in use today. The sale of the *North Shore II* closed the chapter on William Lawrie's Christmas tree ships. Sadly, Lawrie's customers had to find another Christmas tree lot to provide them with the perfect Christmas tree.

Previously published in *Bay View Compass* newspaper.



The North Shore is docking in 1931 at the Kinnickinnic Bridge with a load of 6,500 trees.

# Photos, Photos, Photos!!

## St. Francis Days 2014



R.J. Gross (High-wheeler) and Christine Watts from Fond du Lac with Anna before the parade



A drenched Bill during a torrential rainfall that scattered parade spectators

## Civic Center dedication October 26, 2014



Above: Toni Grabske Nevicosi, Bill Drehfal, Karen Kitzinger, Mary Mingesz, and Carl Kitzinger pose in front of two of the new display cabinets. Thank you Carl and Karen for your generous gift.



Author Anna Passante sells her books and gets in a little spinning.



Right: Barbara Janiszewski and Terry Duffey successfully seeking news members for the Society at the dedication.

## St. Francis Historical Society Event Wednesday, November 12, 2014



Above: At the event, author Anna Passante talked about her book to an audience of 130 people.



Left to right: Mary Drehfal, Terry Duffey, and Jan Pientok greet and register attendees for the Nov. 12 event.

## Display Committee

Display Committee and designer pose for photos on the last day of cabinet installation. It was nine months of hard work.

**Left photo:** Society members Barbara J., Mary Drehfal, designer Susan Catral, and Anna Passante

**Far right photo:** Anna, Bill Drehfal, Barbara, and Mary



St. Francis Historical Society  
4235 S. Nicholson Avenue  
St. Francis, WI 53235



## Membership Form

Do you need to pay your dues for 2015? Do you want to join the St. Francis Historical Society? Please complete this form.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone # \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Individual \$8.00      \_\_\_\_\_ Student \$5.00      \_\_\_\_\_ Life \$100

\_\_\_\_\_ Family \$10.00      \_\_\_\_\_ Corporate \$100

\_\_\_\_\_ I would like to donate materials to the Society

Checks payable to St. Francis Historical Society. Membership runs Jan. 1 to Dec. 31.

Clip and mail this membership form to:

St. Francis Historical Society c/o Barbara Janiszewski 4007 S. Lipton Avenue, St. Francis, WI 53235

Would you like to have the newsletter sent by email?

Questions? Email us: [st.francishistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:st.francishistoricalsociety@gmail.com)