



# St. Francis HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## NOJOSHING

Indian word for "straight tongue"

Land protrudes out into Lake Michigan like a straight tongue

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

published quarterly  
Non-Profit Organization 501c3

## December 2015

### Growing Up in St. Francis

By Julie Myszkowski

I grew up in the 1970s on Lipton Avenue in the city of St. Francis. When many people think of the '70s, they think of the Watergate scandal, Kent State, or Vietnam - you know, weighty stuff. To me, it was all about *Little House on the Prairie* books, Barbies, and Holly Hobby. And friends. The '70s were the days when many mothers were at home watching the children while the husband was at work. And there were a lot of children at that time. I was the youngest of five. Today that could potentially qualify you for a reality TV show, but back then, it wasn't that big a family. Our neighborhood was chock full of kids running around and ready to play at any given time. And in the summer that is where we played -- in our neighborhood with our neighborhood friends. During the school year we played with kids our own age from school, but come summer we all seemed to gravitate toward our own block. What did we do? Well, one thing we did was stay outside all day. We ran through the sprinkler. We played with Barbies. We hung upside down from our knees on the metal pole that was used for the wash line. We had races. We got thirsty and drank right out of the garden hose. We waited for one of the older kids to organize a game of Kick the Can or Red Light, Green Light. We waved at the police officers when they drove by. To this day when I see an officer patrolling in his squad car, I have to remind myself to put my hand down - they aren't used to people just randomly waving

at them! And we wore no shoes of any kind. Before bed we would wash our feet, which were absolutely filthy. A stubbed toe was a common occurrence. If we were lucky, someone's parents would have ordered a new stove or refrigerator, and we would get the BOX. We would be entertained for weeks - or as long as the box stayed together. The point is, we just found things to do. Being inside the house wasn't really an option because there just simply wasn't anything going on inside. Cartoons only aired on Saturday mornings. On rainy days, we would go to the neighbor's house that had a covered porch and play there. Or if it was a gentle rain, we would splash through the puddles and walk through the streams in the gutters. Going shoeless really had some advantages. When I got a little older, I was allowed to walk up the street to Greene Park. This was my home away from home. The kiddie pool and playground (with the metal slide - very hot in the summer) were enough for me. I'd walk up to the park in the morning, come home for lunch, then walk back up in the afternoon, then walk home for supper. Speaking of supper, you knew when that occurred because your mom would open the door and start calling your name and those of your siblings. We weren't high tech like our neighbors to the north of us, who just rang a dinner bell. A dinner bell!! Summer vacation seemed to last FOREVER.

Fall brought me back to Thompson School, new clothes and putting on some footwear. No need to wash our feet before bed each night anymore, but I recall only bathing once a week - on Saturday night. Afterwards, if we were lucky, we would get a treat, like a soda. Unfortunately for us, the only soda in the house was my mother's TAB - possibly the most horrid and disgusting soda every made. But soda was a treat, right? So we divided it between us (using a liquid measuring

cup) and gulped it down, reminding ourselves that whole time that this was a TREAT. Mmm hmm. The only time we got decent soda was if someone had a birthday party or for large gatherings, like the annual family picnic, Christmas, or Easter. Then we made a trip to Black Bear Soda and were able to pick out the flavors we liked best. Black cherry, in case you were wondering. Black Bear always had that same smell: the Caruso brothers' cigars. It didn't bother me; I was going to get SODA. But only two. That was our limit, and we could either drink them outside or stay in an uncarpeted room. No matter, that soda tasted divine! But I digress....Back to Thompson School, back to hanging out with our school friends. We walked to school every day whether it was raining or snowing or 10 degrees below zero. We walked. The real issue today's parents might have with this was that first we had to walk through a vacant lot and then down an alley. Oh yes, we lived life on the edge. At recess, playground games such as kickball and baseball were organized, teams were picked by "captains," and you just hoped to God you weren't the last person chosen. I recall being quite an expert at jump rope. "Not last night but the night before - twenty four robbers came knockin' at my door..." In the winter we weren't as enamored with being outside all the time, but when we were, we made the most of it. Unlike today, there seemed to be no shortage of snow. My school friends and I would play "King of the Mountain" on top of snow piles. I remember once that the snow was so high that we jumped from the second story balcony of the apartment buildings behind Ola's Supermarket into the snow below - which was the parking lot. The basketball courts at Greene Park would be flooded and turned into an ice skating rink. This is where my dreams of becoming an Olympic figure skater were crushed (weak ankles). I really only wanted to wear the flouncy skirts anyway. To warm up, we would go into the park pavilion where that familiar park pavilion smell would remind us of all the time we spent there in the summer. Snowball fights were not uncommon, at the park and even on the school playground. I could end here by saying that it was a simpler time, but really - it's all just perspective. As I said at the beginning, there were some weighty things going on at the time. But for me, growing up in St. Francis on Lipton Avenue, I felt sheltered, safe, and free to just be happily sipping a Black Bear soda, waving at police officers, and drinking from the garden hose in my filthy dirty feet.

## What's New?

### Welcome new members

John & Kathie Quirk, Karen & Mike Meador, Amanda Dahlquist and the Pellegrino family

### Membership renewal

Be sure to fill out your membership renewal by Dec. 31.

### General Meeting

Our next general meeting is January 15 at 9:30 am. It is also the day of election of officers and board members.

### Memories

Do you have a special Easter memory? Let us know. We'd love to publish them in the newsletter for all to enjoy. Email us at: [stfrancishistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:stfrancishistoricalsociety@gmail.com) or call at 414-316-4391.

### Cousin's Subs Fundraiser

The Society raised \$159 during our September 16 fundraiser at Cousin's Subs. Our next one is on Wednesday, March 23, 2016. Mark your calendar!!!

### Cemetery Committee

The Lake Protestant Cemetery Committee has raised just over \$2,000 from the sale of the book, *From Nojoshing to St. Francis* by Anna Passante, to have 15 gravestones restored by Shane Piek of Chilton, Wisconsin. Donations are appreciated. Contact the committee at 414-316-4391 or [st.francishistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:st.francishistoricalsociety@gmail.com).

### Christmas Dinner

The annual Christmas dinner will be at the Polonez Restaurant, 4016 South Packard Avenue, Thursday, December 3, at 6:00. Shane Piek will be doing a short presentation about his work in old cemeteries.

### Bake sale

In order to raise money for operation funds, the Society will be having a bake sales during the voting at the Civic Center on February 16. We need volunteers to bake cookies! Arrangements for pickup can be made if needed. Call 414-316-4391.

### Pie Auction

Our pie auction was very successful. We earned just over \$400 for our educational fund to help teach the school children the history of St. Francis and the Town of Lake.

# Harvest Fest 2015 photos



Homemade pies are ready for the auction. We made \$400.



Mary Drehfal helps a visitor weave on our table loom



Fest goers raise their paddles to bid on pie slices.



Sal Luigui of Papa Luigi restaurants was our auctioneer. Thanks, Sal

## Yellowstone Trail-Wisconsin

By Terry Duffey

In recent months, you may have noticed the Yellowstone Trail signs in Wisconsin. It is expected that signs like these will be placed on Packard and Kinnickinnic avenues this December to commemorate the route through Milwaukee County in the early days of automobile travel to get to Yellowstone Park in Wyoming.

Automobile sales in 1912 were increasing, but roads were not connected and thus deterred long distance travel. In addition, roads were dusty and often muddy. Travelers wore long duster coats, goggles, and hats.

That same year, a small group of citizens met and laid out a route from Plymouth Rock, Massachusetts, to Puget Sound in the state of Washington. They called themselves the "Yellowstone Trail Association." They lobbied federal, state, and counties to invest in road development. Piece by piece, a long distance road of 3,600 miles was laid and completed by 1919. Communities vied to be included along the route, foreseeing development and tourism trade.

The Trail came to Wisconsin in 1915. The route in St. Francis originally went along the lake, Highway 32. It cut over to Conway Street in Bay View. Around 1925, the route was changed to go down Packard Avenue, west on Howard Avenue, and then north on Kinnickinnic Avenue. It continued through Milwaukee County and wound its way through the state, exiting in St. Croix County. Altogether, the route went through eighteen counties in Wisconsin, starting in Kenosha.

By the 1930s, other highways, routes, and maps had been developed, diminishing the "star" power of the Yellowstone Trail. On the other hand, the route still basically exists. A wonderful illustrated color centennial booklet of the Yellowstone Trail in Wisconsin was printed in 2012. It shows county by county, the route through Wisconsin. Numerous local advertisers are featured along with historical sites. Many communities include antique cars of that early era in their parades. One community points out with a sign in their parade that it is on the Yellowstone Trail route.

You can Google Yellowstone Trail Wisconsin or go to [Yellowstonetrail.org](http://Yellowstonetrail.org) to learn much more about the trail here in Wisconsin or nationally.



## May We Help the Children Rest in Peace

by Anna Passante, member of the Cemetery Committee

Most gravestone epitaphs are written to convey feelings of grief and sadness over the loss of a loved one. Whether the epitaph is just a phrase or a detailed poem, the inscription can express the tremendous loss felt by family members. Reading headstone epitaphs was a hobby of George J. Ramponi, and in 1971, he transcribed all the gravestone epitaphs that he could find in the Lake Protestant Cemetery. (His booklet is in the Humanities room at Milwaukee's Central Library.) The following information was taken from this booklet.

William and Catherine Thompson lost their beloved Lewis B. Thompson in 1861 at the age of six. "Little Lewis/I know that we must part/no power could save thy quiet goodness from the early grave" were his loving parents parting words. Lewis' sister, Ellen, age three months, is also buried there.

Eva, daughter of Hayden Thompson, died at age six months in 1854, and her epitaph reads: "Suffer little children to come unto me for of such is the kingdom of heaven (Mat 19:14). Mary, granddaughter of Elijah Estes, died in 1876 at age four months and is buried in the Estes lot.

Two sets of twins of Jacob and Magdalena Bessey are reportedly buried in the cemetery. Eleanore and Ruth died in 1902 at age two. Karl and Adolph died in 1907, age one month. The Bessey's had rented a farm on the present site of the high school, and the steep sledding hill on Lake Drive is still known by some as Bessey's hill.

Willie Matteus died in 1894 at age five years and his epitaph reads, "Hier ruht in Gott," translated as "Here rests in God." Willie's stone is resting on the grass face down and needs to be reset on a new base.

Lena Donsing died in 1869 at the age of three. Her father, William, was a trustee for the cemetery. Her epitaph is written in German and is roughly translated as the following, "Too good for a world full of deficiencies/She rushes like a transfigured angel/ the sky is their home/ I was a comfort to my mother, my father's joy /but God loves me more than both." Lena Donsing's stone lies flat, face up, buried in the grass and needs to be raised up and placed on a new base.

To put infant deaths into perspective, in 1850, the infant mortality rate for the United States was about 217 deaths per 1,000 births for white children and 420 per 1,000 for African-American children. Many of the deaths were due to childhood diseases. By 2003, the overall U. S. infant mortality rate was 7 deaths per 1,000 live births. Early prenatal care, vaccinations, and antibiotics have contributed to the decline in the death rate.

In Lot 41 at the rear of the cemetery is the resting place of at least nine babies. According to an article written by Mary Becker for the *St. Francis Reminder* newspaper, St. John's Lutheran Church in Cudahy purchased this lot in 1910, due to a large number of infant deaths in their parish. Seven babies were buried there in the summer of 1910 and two in 1912. Various causes of death are listed on their death certificates. The burials in 1910 were Stefan Tuska, age eight months; Kyrstina Krocjan, six months; Stefan Martis, one year; Emilia Kral, three years; her sister, Maria, age one year; Olga Kalus, two years; and Irena Kral Schabla, one year. The burials in 1912 were Christina Kupec, age three months and Stefan Batovsky, six months.

As you can see in the photos, the stones need to be reset. Would you like to adopt a baby grave? The cost per stone will be around \$50- \$75 each. Or would you give a donation towards the restorations? Any size donation would be appreciated.

Contact us at 414-316-4391 or [st.francishistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:st.francishistoricalsociety@gmail.com) or call Anna at 482-1781. You can include a donation with the renewal form included in this newsletter. Just indicate the donation on your check.



Stefan Tuska



Olga Kalus



Irena Kral Schabla

**Be sure to renew your membership!!!  
Fill out and return by December 31, 2015**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

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Do you want your newsletter send by email? \_\_\_\_\_yes

Individual \$8.00

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**Return to: St. Francis Historical Society  
3400 E. Howard Ave.  
St. Francis, WI 53235**

\_\_\_\_\_ I would like to donate an additional \$\_\_\_\_\_ to the Society

\_\_\_\_\_ I would like to donate an additional \$\_\_\_\_\_ to the Cemetery Fund.

***A Short Christmas Memory***

by Barbara Janiszewski

When my kids were little, we used to string popcorn and cranberries to hang on the Christmas tree. Over the years I have collected many ornaments that were different, including some that looked like cherries and a few that looked like apples. When my son John came home from college at Christmas his first year he looked at the cherries and apples and said food didn't belong on a Christmas tree but as long as it was there he would add something else. He took a piece of summer sausage, punched a hole in it for a piece of yarn, and promptly hung it right in the front of the tree. I guess he forgot about the popcorn and cranberries.

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



## Mark Your Calendar

**General Meetings:** January 16, 2016 (elections),  
February 20, 2016, March 19, 2016 at 9:30 am

**Christmas dinner:** Polonez Restaurant 6:00  
Thursday, December 3.

**Bake Sale** at Civic Center voting day Feb. 16,  
2016.

**Facebook:** St. Francis Historical Society

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

**Website:** [stfranciswihistoricalsociety.org](http://stfranciswihistoricalsociety.org)

**Phone:** 414-316-4391

## 2015 Officers

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## Newsletter

Anna Passante  
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