



# NOJOSHING

Indian word for "straight tongue"

land protrudes out into Lake Michigan like a straight tongue

Newsletter published quarterly

Non-Profit Organization 501c3

## December 2020

### Meeting Cancellations Due to Covid-19

Due to the Covid-19 situation, all board and general meetings have been canceled for the rest of the year, as well as the Christmas dinner. All meetings have been canceled until further notice.

### Elections for Officer Positions Delayed

Due to the Covid-19 situation, the general meeting and the election of board members scheduled for January 2021 has been canceled. The election will be rescheduled for a later date.

### 2021 Membership

Due to the Covid-19 situation, 2020 membership will be extended through 2021. No need to renew.

### **St. Aemilian's Orphanage Christmas Story**

(excerpt from the book *From Nojoshing to St. Francis, From Settlement to City: the Early history of St. Francis, Wisconsin: Part 1* by Anna Passante)

Mother [Sister] Aemilian was very grateful for any help the [St. Aemilian's] asylum received from the public. In a letter published in the German newspaper, *Der Seebote*, on January 7, 1860, Mother Aemilian expressed her appreciation for the money raised through Christmas collections that were taken up by three German churches. In her letter, Mother Aemilian said that the needs of the orphanage was so great that she often scolded the children by saying, "Children, pray, the cellar is almost empty and the bread is thinner."

There was a memorable Christmas story that could have been aptly entitled, "The Year There

Almost Wasn't a Christmas Tree." The story begins at the deathbed of Mrs. Henry, one of the occupants of the asylum. Mother Aemilian thanked her for her services to the asylum and asked her for a favor. "When you get to heaven," Mother Aemilian requested, "ask the Christ Child why he had forgotten the orphans Christmas tree this year."

Shortly after Mrs. Henry died, it was the eve of the Feast of the Three Kings, Epiphany, and the children were singing a Christmas carol during a procession down to the classroom. Suddenly, brightness, much like the star on the first Christmas Eve, illumined their way. And there before them were seven Christmas trees, with branches covered with sweet treats. The orphans rejoiced; the Christ Child had not forgotten them after all. Perhaps, Mrs. Henry had come through after all, and the Christ Child inspired the Board of Directors to provide the trees, food, and goodies. Mother Aemilian thanked everyone in the name of the 50 orphans who called the asylum home.

Here is a big shout out to our treasurer, Barbara Janiszewski, who recently fell in her home and is in the hospital.

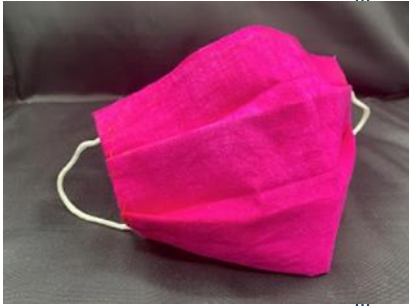
## Get Well Soon



# Of Culverts, Ice, and Snow

By Karen Gersonde

Gee, what a year we are having! Covid, isolation, masks, presidential election! I don't ever recall having such a crazy year as this one. And as I write this today, the temperatures are in the 70s for November. Just another factor that this year was anything but normal.



Anyway, that said, after going stir crazy at home this summer, I decided to take a ride to my old neighborhood on East Crawford Avenue. Going to St. Francis is always good for my soul. I now live in Milwaukee, as I have for years now, but St. Francis will always be my true home. As I drove past my old homestead, as my brother now owns this property on East Crawford Avenue, I came upon a construction crew at Deer Creek where it passes under the road on East Crawford Avenue. Curious, I pulled into my brother's driveway and parked my car. To my surprise, the construction crew was rebuilding the old culvert

that was underneath the road. Wow, that old culvert had been there as long as I could remember, since the 1950s and it was probably even older than that. As I watched the crew hauling old bricks and metal away, as the culvert was metal underneath the road, it brought back memories of my childhood playing in the tunnel under the road in winter.

Yup, that's right. For my Crawford Avenue friends and me, that was a winter playground. Deer Creek was right next to our house and when the creek froze over, we were the first ones to play on it. We

never ice skated on it, as there were too many rocks in the way, but oh, we sure slipped and glided over it in our little winter rubber boots. We pretended we were skating which was just as good as the real thing. And extra special in our backyard, we had a small hill that ran right down into the creek. Once the creek froze, we would take our sleds or saucers and sail down the hill right onto the ice. Ok, yes, there were times the ice was not strong enough to hold us and we would

crash right through the ice into the water and get soaked. But it was ok, as it was not deep and we were never in any danger. Our boots



*Karen's childhood home on Crawford Street adjacent to Deer Creek.*



and snow pants got wet but it didn't matter. We continued to play until we were frozen solid, and then we called it a day and went home. Back then we did not have any fancy nylon or gortex waterproof apparel to wear. Snow pants were maybe made out of wool, and I remember my hooded jacket was faux fur. No waterproofing whatsoever. Same for our woolen mittens. When they were wet, they were wet. You didn't dare go ask your mother for another pair as she would make you stay in the house after that. Hence, we never went home until we were done playing.

As for the culvert or tunnel, winter was the only time of the year to walk through the tunnel. I don't know why we did it, I guess because we could. It was cold and dark and creepy, but in winter, we would dare each other to walk from one side to the other, underneath the road. The water in winter was shallow and frozen, plus it was smooth. No rocks under the road. Plus if the ice gave in, you had your boots on, so no problem. You could not completely stand up so you kind of had to hunch over to walk through it. At times, if the ice was thin, it was fun to "crack" through it and hear the crunch crunch crunch of the ice under your feet. Again, why we did it, I have no idea. It was something to do. We always entertained ourselves. And most of my fondest memories are of my friends and me playing outside in our own neighborhood.

So as I watched the construction crew tear down my memories, I felt sad. That old creepy tunnel was a part of my childhood, and I did not want to see it disappear. But truth be told, the sidewalk was starting to cave in, and the old brick wall that was above the tunnel by the openings was old and dangerous. My brother Glenn speculates that those huge gray bricks were part of the old factory that used to be in the field at the end of Crawford Avenue, that was torn down maybe in the 1930s. When the tunnel was actually built I do not know. But I do know that Deer Creek and that culvert provided many hours of winter fun that I will never forget. Even though we were cold and wet.



*In winter, this hill behind Karen's house was a great hill to sled down.*



*The large culvert that Karen and her friends were fond of exploring in winter has been replaced by two culverts.*



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

**Note:**  
**2021 Renewal**  
**information**  
**enclosed**

**2020 Officers**

President.....Anna Passante  
Vice-President..... Sister Ceil Struck  
Secretary.....Stephanie Maxwell  
Treasurer.....Barbara Janiszewski

**Board of Directors**

George Ramponi  
Jan Pientok  
Bill Drehfal  
Jay Wesner  
Nancy Goltz

**Honorary**

Jim Goodwin  
Ralph Voltner  
Marge Tessmer  
Kathy Matthew  
Terry Duffey  
Carol Wojtecki

**Newsletter**

Anna Passante  
Barbara Janiszewski

**Mark Your Calendar**

**Meetings at the Civic Center:**

All meetings for the rest of the year have been canceled due to the Covid-19. There will be no Christmas party this year.

*The historical society office (3400 E. Howard Avenue) will be closed until further notice.*

**Facebook:** St. Francis Historical Society  
**Email:** st.francishistoricalsociety@gmail.com  
**Address:** 3400 E. Howard Ave.  
**Website:** stfranciswihistoricalsociety.org  
**Phone:** 414-316-4391