



# NOJOSHING

Indian word for "straight tongue"

land protrudes out into Lake Michigan like a straight tongue

Newsletter published quarterly

Non-Profit Organization 501c3

## June 2023

### Bakery/Savings & Loan/Liquor Store

by Mike Rudolf

I recently attended a St. Francis Historical Society meeting held in the east conference room of the St. Francis Civic Center. I noticed three photographs on the wall picturing the three buildings that housed the St. Francis Building & Loan (now the PNC Bank). I recognized the first bank building as the former location of the Old Town Line liquor store addressed 3521 South Kinnickinnic Avenue. Fred Schoendorf, the former City of St. Francis clerk, owned the store. I remember the interior of the store because I used to get my haircuts in that neighborhood. Afterwards my father would take me in the liquor store to pick out a candy bar, usually M&M's.

Before the bank occupied the building at 3521 South Kinnickinnic Avenue, it was a bakery. My father, Clarence Rudolf, worked in the bakery and told me stories of his years working there, learning the bakery trade. My father was born in 1910 to Joseph and Gertrude Rudolf who farmed at the east end of Thompson Road. The house still stands at 3623 East Howard Avenue. My father, Clarence, was orphaned in 1920 when my grandparents and my Aunt Celia were killed in a train accident. Their horse and buggy collided with a train at the railroad crossing further west on Thompson Road. My father was in the buggy and was in a coma for three days. [See SFHS newsletter September 20155 for the train accident story.]

Afterward my father was raised by his older sister and brother-in-law, William and Angeline Brehmer. They lived on Bombay Avenue in a house owned by my deceased grandparents. It was immediately north of Elizabeth Avenue and was later torn down to make room for Wisconsin State Highway 794.



Above, the bank building that housed the bakery, then a bank, and finally a liquor store  
Left, Clarence Rudolf in 1919, first communion

After two years of high school, my father dropped out to work in the bakery. It was owned by a family named Sange Martin (it is German for St. Martin). They were German expatriates living in South America and running a lumber business. They were in contention for a

contract to supply lumber for the construction of the Empire State Building in New York City and were required to submit samples for evaluation. The samples never made it to New York due to a shipwreck. The setback ruined their business. Because they were German speaking, they decided to move to Milwaukee and start over and open a bakery.

My father found the bakery a good fit because he was fluent in German, and that was because his father, Joseph Rudolf, allowed only German be spoken in the house. Joseph had this dream of the family moving to Germany when the political and economic situation improved. My father told me he never thought it would happen because of his father's assimilation to America. Furthermore, my father attended Sacred Heart of Jesus School where half the classes were taught in German.

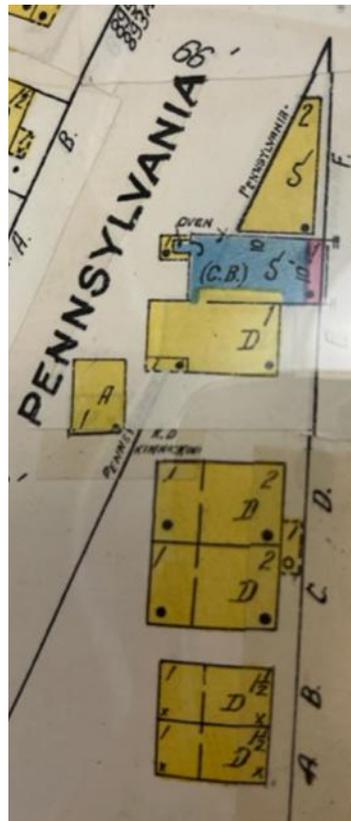
I do not know the years of the bakery's operation or the years my father worked there, but it would have started around 1925. He did mention a few years of unemployment during the Great Depression.

My father told me several amusing stories about his years at the bakery. Among them was the time he had an encounter with two regular visitors---two Milwaukee police officers---Schuch and Schwartz. Imagine police in a bakery!!! One night the officers were heckling my father about what would happen when Milwaukee annexed St. Francis and how they would handle Town of Lake boys. One thing led to another, and it ended up with one of the officers being pushed into a flour bin wearing a brand-new blue uniform. He got up with his nightstick in hand, ready to use it. He was cautioned by his partner that if he used it, it should be for a better reason.

The next night, those same two officers observed my two uncles, Henry Rudolf and Steve Preisle, entering the bakery after hours. When questioned about this late visit, my Uncle Henry threatened to roll them in the flour, just like his brother did. It did not end well for my uncles. They were arrested for some unknown reason and ended up in jail at the Milwaukee Police Department 2nd District Station.

It was up to my aunt, Angie Brehmer, to post their bail.

The Brehmers and the Rudolfs were good friends with their neighbors, the Balkovich



Above is a 1910 Sanborn map updated in 1926. The bakery/bank/liquor store building is in blue, which indicates a cinder/concrete block exterior and pink indicating a brick veneered front. Note the oven in the rear of the building.

## What's New?

### June speaker

At the St. Francis Civic Center on Thursday, June 22, at 6:30 pm, James Heinz of the Wisconsin Marine Historical Society will talk about shipwrecks along Milwaukee County's Lake Michigan shoreline. Light refreshment. Free to the public.

### Lovely city landmark

Mark your calendars!! There will be a historic landmark dedication on Sunday, September 10, at Lovely Spa at 1:00 pm. The building at 3724 South Kinnickinnic Avenue was built as a saloon around the time of the Civil War by Victor Schuerbrock. The historical society will have a dedication ceremony to present the salon owner with a landmark plaque for the buildings exterior.

### Calendar contest

The deadline for submitting photos for the calendar contest has passed. Judging will take place in May. Good luck to all who submitted photos.

family, who built two large beautiful bungalows in the 2300 block of East Elizabeth Avenue where Pennsylvania Avenue dead ends. According to family legend, they were built with moonshine money. The local distilled product was referred to as 3-star Balky, and I was told it was very good. Through the Balkovich family, my father was introduced to Sam Hood, a cook on the Great Lakes ore freighters. Because of his experience as a baker, Sam got my dad a job with United States Steel Corporation as a cook on their ships around 1936.

Town Line Liquor took over the St. Francis Savings and Loan building (the former bakery) when the bank moved to a different building on the same block in 1946. I don't know when the liquor store ceased operations in the building. The building was later used as a warehouse by the operator of a chain of liquor stores. The building and contents were heavily damaged in a fire on New Year's Eve in 1973. The building was eventually razed, and the land was used for expansion of what is now the PNC Bank.

## Letter to the Editor

### Dear Friends,

As I get older, I get more nostalgic. I'm grateful for your historical society and preservation of its history. In January 1964, at age 10, along with my mother (now passed) and step-dad (also gone), I moved to 3312 East Norwich Avenue. We were only a couple blocks from Thompson School, where I arrived in the second semester of fifth grade. At that time, both fourth and fifth grades were in one classroom. Somewhere in those years, I remember one of my teachers being Mrs. McNally. Before the gymnasium was built, the area was a playground, where I vividly remember playing kickball during recess. The cemetery across the street was unkept and smelled in the summertime!

I started St. Francis High School in 1968. At that time, Ola's grocery store was still there where we did our shopping. At the end of Norwich (where the street dead ended at Kingan Avenue) was a huge mound of dirt, which we either walked over or drove our bikes over to get to Ola's or the high school.

I still have my high school yearbooks. I have been unsuccessful to get in touch with most of the students with whom I attended. The only alumni information I have received was in 1981, which was my graduating class' 10th anniversary. At that time, Dan and Pam (Wink) Kovalavitch, grade school sweethearts, organized the 1971 alumni event.

A couple years ago, my sister, Dawn Mueller-Finger, sent me a list of former St. Francis High School students who have passed away. The list included most recently Fred McCabe, which whom I was friends. Not listed was my closest buddy, Paul Rosek. I have been in touch with his widow, Donna, now re-married.

For the most part, I walked to high school and ate lunch in the cafeteria. The library was directly above the cafeteria. I have since found out the school has been completely remodeled, and I would probably not recognize it now.

My favorite activity was the swimming pool. Our next door neighbors were the Hart family. I believe they had four girls. The oldest, Linda, would occasionally drive me to school in her 1957 Chevy! That's not all, the family had THREE 1957 Chevys! (Car enthusiasts are drooling now.)

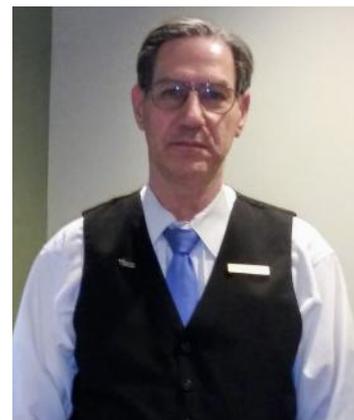
My first mode of transportation was the 66 bus I caught early in the morning at the corner of Norwich and Kinnickinnic.

My first job was in high school and was delivering the *Milwaukee Sentinel* (before the *Journal Sentinel* merger). My route was in Cudahy. After that, I got an after school part-time job at Woolworths in Cudahy. I broke down boxes, cleaned the soda fountain area, mopped floors, etc. The store manager was a pipe smoking, kind, portly man named Mr. Becker, who occasionally gave me a ride home after work. Also working there was Jane (Mr. Becker's wife?) and associate Phyllis. Anyone remember them? That would have been in 1968.

I would like to hear from any Thompson School or St. Francis High School alumni.

Anyone can contact me at:

Glen Morris P. O. Box 424 Hammond, IN 46324  
glen6491@yahoo.com



Top: Glen Morris at his security job at a Chicago condo.

Above: the 1965-66 7th grade class at Thompson School. Glen is the one with the X. Mr. Ripple was the teacher.

# When Bicycles Were Everything

By Karen Gersonde

When summer arrives, I always think back to the great summers that I had as a kid growing up in St. Francis in the 1950s and 1960s. Summer meant no school and playing with your neighborhood friends until the streetlights came on. As kids our main transportation was of course our bicycles. Those bikes meant everything to us back then.

Mostly, I had used bicycles until I got older. My first bike that I can remember was a red and white Radio Flyer classic tri-wheel bike. I think it was a hand me down from my older cousin. I loved riding that bike, and my neighbor, Mike, would ride on the back step of it as we rode up and down the sidewalk. If we got bored with that, we would turn it upside down and just hand pedal the front wheel to see how fast it would go. Why, I have no idea. We were kids!

When I got a little older, my parents got me another used bike, probably a hand me down from another cousin. I had lots of cousins. It was a 20" bike. I loved that bike! It had a basket, streamers, and a bell. I always had a bell on my bike. At that time, my brother Glenn got a new bike, as he was older than me. He got a red and silver Schwinn 26". It was pretty neat. It had a front carrier and a light! I thought, wow, maybe someday I will get a brand-new shiny Schwinn bike.

My turn for a new bike came when I was ten years old. For my birthday, my parents bought me a brand-new Schwinn Deluxe Breeze 26" girls bicycle in purple and silver. It was the best! That was my absolute favorite bike and it took me everywhere for many years. When I scraped up enough money, I would go to the Bay View Bike Shop in St. Francis at 2248 East St. Francis Avenue and buy whatever accessories I could. I bought a bell, streamers, and a basket. In later years, I bought a speedometer and a generator light, which was nice for riding when it got dark.

I rode that bike all over St. Francis, Cudahy, Bay View, and even Milwaukee, all the way out to West Allis where my cousins lived. My dad worked days and my mom didn't drive, so if I wanted to hang out with my cousins, I would ride my bike that far.

As for St. Francis, if you wanted to find out where your friends were, all you had to do was look for the house where all of the bikes were parked outside and that is where the gang would be. You would park your bike and go have fun.

Also, it was fun decorating your bike for the 4th of July parade. That was always the highlight of summer. For that, my dad had bought a used bike for my brother and me, and outfitted it with a banana seat, as those were very popular. I would use that bike for the parade, as it was easier to decorate than my Schwinn girl's bike. It was really a fun bike to ride. The seat made all the difference, plus two people could ride on the bike, so that was special.

As I was looking through my old photos, I did find one photo of my Schwinn Deluxe Breeze bike. It was taken in 1973. As I looked at it, I felt sad. I had graduated high school that year and went off to college. I eventually bought myself a car and that was the end of the bike. That was the last photo of my Schwinn and me. The bike sat in my parent's garage until I finally sold it one day. I swear I saw that bike on the campus of UW-Madison, as my daughter attended there, but I could not be certain. It was a fleeting glance. I sure hope it found new life making some other person happy and making memories along the way.



## Did you know?.....

There was a quite a hullabaloo at city hall in 2000 when it was found that the 2000-2001 South Shore Community telephone book left out St. Francis. The book contained information for the communities of Cudahy, Oak Creek, South Milwaukee, and Bay View, so why not St. Francis?

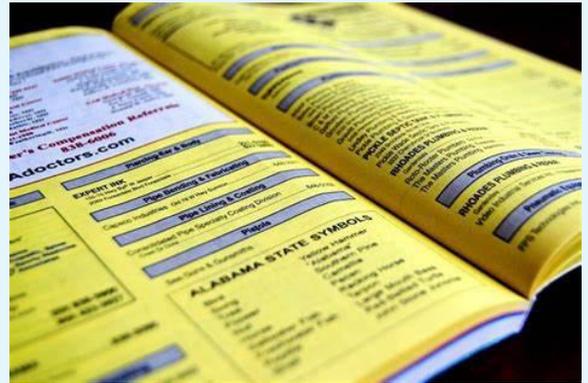
According to the *St. Francis Reminder* (October 19, 2000) members of the common council were not happy about this elimination. It seems that the St. Francis listings were mixed in with Milwaukee listings. St. Francis Common Council President, John Vugrinovich told the council that his wife, Margo, noticed that everyone she knew from St. Francis was listed in the telephone book as living in Milwaukee.

Mayor Lawrence Burazin and the council members were listed as living in Milwaukee, according to the *Reminder* article. The addresses for the city hall, police, and fire departments were listed as being in Milwaukee. Another error was the absence of the St. Francis zip code, which was adopted in January 1992.

Burazin said in the *Reminder*, "I don't think (the publishers) know what the heck they're doing," Vugrinovich said: "Our little community has been fighting the big community (Milwaukee) for a long time. I want people to know that the city is expanding and working to make things better."

The 2000-2001 edition was the last one published by Sprint. The white and yellow pages was taken over by Yellow Book USA, which has been in existence since 1930.

According to Yellow Book USA representatives, the information for the white and yellow pages came from Ameritech. Monica Capelli, an Ameritech representative, was quoted in the *Reminder* that Ameritech uses information that the company has about the customer for emergency purposes. "A person can be living in one city, but because of the 911 system used, may be listed as another." ~**Anna Passante**



## Did you know?.....

In December 1998, the city of St. Francis Common Council voted 3-2 to allow the city administrator to talk formally to the Potawatomi tribe about possibly expanding its casino operation to St. Francis. Councilperson Dennis Lillrose didn't vote for or against. Because of his Native American heritage (L'Anse-Chippewa), he decided not to take sides in the matter. According to Lillrose, he voted "present," which means he voted with the majority.

The tribe had its casino in Milwaukee's Menomonee River Valley but wanted to expand its bingo operation by adding bingo machines. However, Milwaukee officials claim the bingo machines were really slot machines and were opposed to the expansion of gambling there. Mayor John O. Norquist opposed "the tribe pushing federal, state, and local officials to lift the limit of 200 slot machines there, and to allow the casino to run blackjack card tables," reported the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*.

Council member John Vugrinovich voted against having a casino in St. Francis. According to a *Journal Sentinel* article, Vugrinovich said, "Number one, I don't think we have enough land available." Also, he didn't think the local community would accept a casino. "We're heavily loaded with Christians...a lot of Christian activity."

One Milwaukee alderman indicated that "red tape would be extensive" and could take several years or more. The tribe would have to own the land for the casino, and the federal government would have to agree to put the land in trust. The governor, Tommy Thompson, had the final say.

A week after the common council voted to bringing gambling to the city, Mayor Milton Vretenar remained apposed to the idea. He cited potential negative effects of the gambling on family values and culture.

Casino expansion did happen, but not in St. Francis. Governor Thompson approved an expansion of the Potawatomi casino, granting the tribe, according to the *Journal Sentinel*, 25 blackjack tables and 800 new slot machines, bringing the total to 1,000. ~**Anna Passante**



# St. Francis Fire Department Hosts The Milwaukee Honor Guard Clinic by Anna Passante

St. Francis Fire Department hosted the Milwaukee Honor Guard Clinic for Funeral Operations School the week of April 16. Attendees, 120 of them, came from 20 states and Canada. The training took all week and three locations in St. Francis were used for the training. The purpose of the clinic was to teach attendees how to perform funeral duties in sync, properly, and professionally.

- Training for church funeral services took place at the Mary, Mother of the Church Pastoral Center chapel (formerly the Cousin's Center).
- The Lion's Club substituted for a funeral home.
- Gravesite training took place at the Lake Protestant Cemetery.

According to the website <https://hgcstraining.org>

“The Milwaukee Honor Guard Clinic’s goal is to equip members of the fire service, EMS service and law enforcement on the basic foundational pieces of performing a line of duty death funeral. The main focus is serving the families of the fallen hero. This is one of the hardest days in their life, and as honor guard members, it is our responsibility to make that day as easy as possible for them. This enables the family to grieve in peace and honor their loved one.”



## Training photos at the Lake Protestant Cemetery in St. Francis

photos Anna Passante



***James Heinz of the Wisconsin Marine Historical Society will talk about shipwrecks along Milwaukee County's Lake Michigan shoreline***  
***St. Francis Civic Center Thursday, June 22 6:30 pm***

by Anna Passante

Shipwrecks in the Great Lakes are protected by state law under Section 44.47. A shipwreck site is considered an archaeological site and a gravesite. Divers can visit the site and take pictures, but need a salvage permit from the state historical society to remove any item.

In the 1970s the St. Francis Historical Society received some items, including some small tools, from the *Sebastopol* shipwreck located in 15 feet of water off the shore of the city of St. Francis, across from the seminary. Divers in the 1970s salvaged items from the sunken ship, including pewter tableware and ironstone dishes.

### ***The Sebastopol Sunk Off the Coast of St. Francis***

The steamer *Sebastopol*, piloted by Capt. Thomas Watts, left Buffalo, New York, on September 12, 1855, with a full crew of 33 and 60 passengers. A large portion of the 600-ton cargo belonged to parties in Milwaukee. The cargo, worth \$100,000, included copper, tin, lead and iron ingots, safes, and 50 horses.

The *Sebastopol* arrived near the Milwaukee harbor during a severe northeastern storm. Captain Watts sailed towards what he thought were lights on the harbor pier, but in all likelihood were the lights of another ship or the lights of the houses on the bluff. The *Sebastopol* traveled off course three miles south of the harbor and struck bottom 200 feet off the shore of the present day St. Mary's Academy in St. Francis.

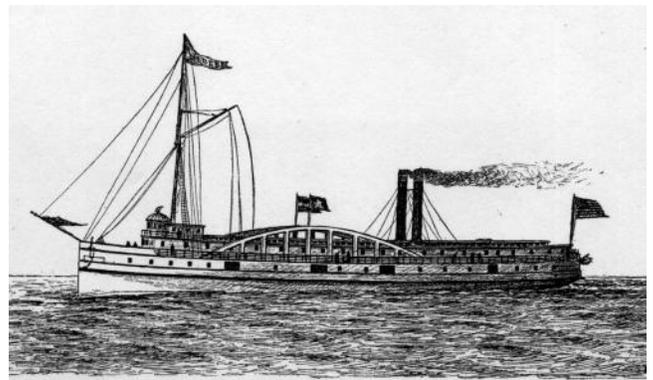
*Sebastopol* crew members set out in a lifeboat, but it capsized and three were drowned. A government lifeboat rescued crew and passengers, including Captain Watts' wife and four children. Seven or eight of the horses were saved, with some survivors reaching the shore on horseback. Valued at \$1,000 each, more horses could have been saved but it was impossible to get them to jump into the water.

The bodies of the three crewmembers, James Clark, Frank (last name unknown), and Morris Berry were recovered from the lake. "I have had all three of the bodies taken to the Lake Protestant Cemetery [in St. Francis] and decently buried side by side," said Justice of the Peace Jared Thompson in a *Milwaukee Sentinel* editorial. Three more bodies were later recovered. Cargo was strewn across the beach for two of three miles and at the bottom of the lake.

The *Milwaukee Sentinel* reported that it was difficult to obtain the facts and names in regard to the loss of life, as a great number of the crew who were not engaged in the attempt to save lives were too drunk to know their own names, much less to tell those of others.

*The Daily American* newspaper reported that the Catholic Priests at the newly built seminary refused to harbor the saved women and children. The *Milwaukee Daily Sentinel* refuted this statement, saying, "the priests ordered all the workmen engaged in building the seminary to render aid to the shipwreck victims. They were made warm and comfortable--refreshments prepared---a horse and buggy dispatched for a physician...and worked with a will in hauling ashore and fastening the very ropes by which the wrecked sufferers were rescued."

A more complete article about the accident was published in the *Manitowoc Herald* with a list of survivors and fatalities. The article mentions two German passengers drowned when they tried to make their way from the boat to shore. The article also mentions the drowning of two other crewmembers---Bradley Davis, a waiter (identified as "colored"), and William James, a cook. No information was found that identified Bradley Davis or William James as being buried in Lake Protestant Cemetery. It appears the bodies of the two crew members and the two German passengers may have never been recovered.



A side-wheel steamship similar to the *Sebastopol*



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

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**Newsletter**

Anna Passante

***Mark YourCalendar***

**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.**

June 17, 2023

July 15, 2023

August 19, 2023

**Upcoming events** (see “What’s New” column for details)

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**Website:** stfranciswihistoricalsociety.org

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