



NOJOSHING

Indian word for "straight tongue"

land protrudes out into Lake Michigan like a straight tongue

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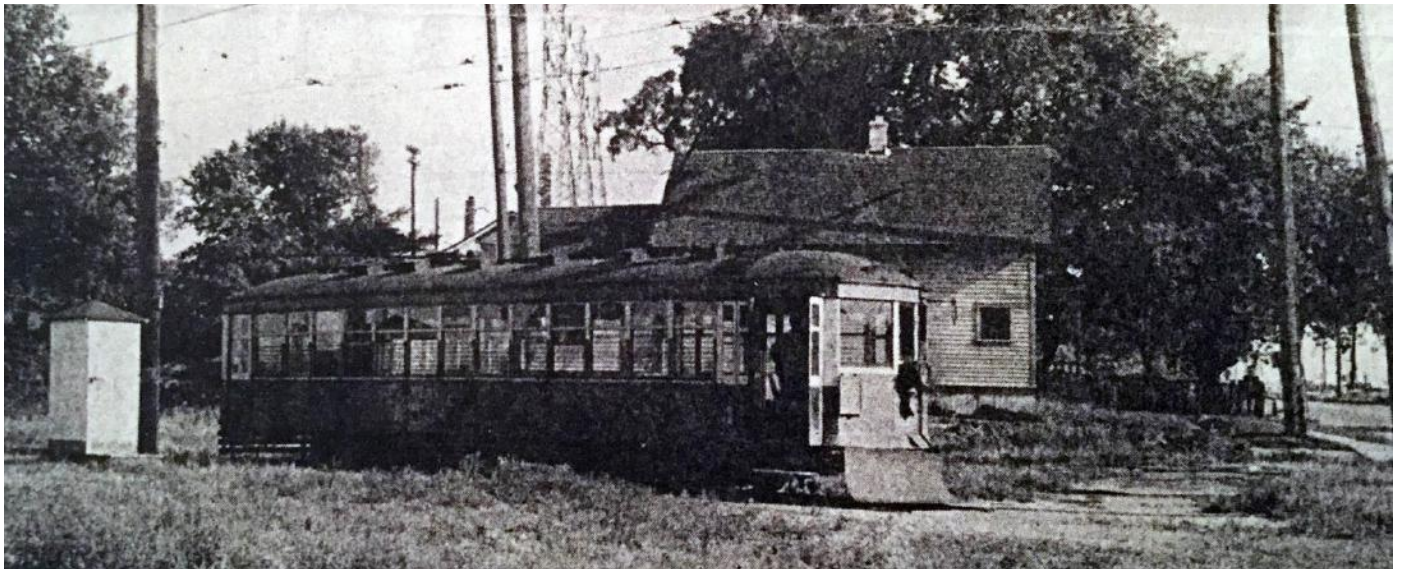
Lakeside Power Plant Waiting Room

by Anna Passante

The house pictured here (behind the streetcar) was formerly located at 3938 S. Kinnickinnic Avenue, the southeast corner of Howard and Kinnickinnic avenues. It was owned by the Milwaukee Railway & Transport Company (later known as the Wisconsin Electric Company. Beginning in 1921, it was used as a "waiting room" for Lakeside Power Plant workers. Workers needed transportation from Kinnickinnic Avenue to the power plant on South Lake Drive, and the "waiting room" provided shelter.

The company ran a streetcar line through the fields going west of Kinnickinnic, which today is the path of East Howard Avenue. The workers waited in the front room of the Kinnickinnic Avenue house for the streetcar. The rest of the house was rented out. Columnist Mary Becker reported in the *Cudahy Reminder* that Jim Raabe, the electric company's manager, called the house "Huntington Waiting Station." No information has been found about the Huntington connection.

Hazel and Ray West and their son Bill, rented the rear portion of the first floor and second floor for \$10 a month. The last person to live in the house was Bill's uncle, Harts Williamson, who left the house after living there for 40 years.



Above, the streetcar and the waiting station house

The streetcar, as well as the waiting room, was discontinued in the 1960s. According to Becker, "homeless or intoxicated men used to slip in there for shelter from the cold." The West family later opened the front room to the rest of the house.

It is not known who originally built the house. However, according to deed records, in 1883 Louis A. Bonham purchased ten acres of farmland from J. H. Thompson, and the waiting-room house may have been on those acres at the time of the 1883 purchase. Or Bonham may have built the house soon after the purchase.

The house was razed in the late 1990s, but was first used by the St. Francis Fire Department as a training exercise.



Above: Final photo of the Waiting Room before it burned by the fire department and was razed.

Below: In this photo you can see the railroad tracks extending to the lake. Note two women going into the waiting room.



Street Car 523 & 882

Car 523 and 882 were two of the streetcars assigned to the Lakeside Power Plant to shuttle workers from Kinnickinnic Avenue to the plant. The streetcar, operated by The Milwaukee Railway & Transport Company, ran on the Lakeside Belt Line from South Kinnickinnic Avenue to the Lakeside Power Plant on private right-of-way. It was a free service for employees of the plant. Note that Car 882 pictured on the previous page has a snowplow attached to the front.

What's New?

Mark your calendars: Jessica Michna's presentation of her newest character on Thursday, June 13. Refreshments at 6:00 pm, program at 6:30 pm at the civic center. **"Molly Brown: Hard Scrabble to High Society"**
See: <https://youtu.be/9cuVpvf10Ag> for a short video of Molly Brown.



Remembered as "The Unsinkable" Molly Brown, the lady was more than a survivor of the Titanic disaster. Gold prospector, gambler, and card shark barely scratches the surface of this brave, dynamic woman of the early 20th century. Learn of Molly's fascinating life and meet some of the interesting characters she met along the way.

St. John's School for the Deaf

Do you remember the St. John's School for the Deaf, once housed in what is now the Deer Creek Intermediate School at 3680 S. Kinnickinnic Ave? The school was founded in 1859 and closed in 1983. Because of its historical significance to the city of St. Francis, the St. Francis Historical Society is in the process of creating two new information signs to memorialize the deaf school. St. Francis Schools superintendent, Deb Kerr, and the school board have welcomed and are excited about the project. MKEgraphics, a local company, will create the signs. John Toth, the designer, has created many such signs in the Milwaukee County Parks, as well as two signs for the Lake Protestant Cemetery in St. Francis. We'll keep you updated!!



The signs for St. John's School for the Deaf will be similar to this sign placed in the Lake Protestant Cemetery in 2022 by the historical society.

Annual Christmas Dinner 2023 at Joe's K-Ranch Speaker: Juliet Hills on the Christmas Tree Ship



By George...I think he's got it!!!

by St. Francis Historical Society board member George Ramponi



Milwaukee's Blizzard of '47

by George Ramponi

Ever wonder why we call a severe, rapidly falling snowfall a "blizzard?" Rewind to March 1870. The term blizzard in 1870 was "an old bare-knuckle boxing term describing a relentless series of devastating blows to one's opponent." O.C. Bates, the editor of the *Northern Vindicator* (Estherville, Iowa), used the term blizzard following a particularly severe two-day snowstorm March 14-16, 1870, in northern Iowa and SW Minnesota. Up to 16 inches of snow fell. The U. S. Signal Corps Weather Service picked up the term six years later, and ever since severe winter snowfalls would be called blizzards.

As a child, I remember the "old guys" remarking "dis is nuttin'" following a mere three to six-inch snowfall. The old guys recalled "The Armistice Day Blizzard of '40," when dozens of ill prepared duck hunters froze to death "up nort" or the Blizzard of '24 "zwei feet's und zo kalt [cold feet]." But the storm most often talked about was The Great Blizzard of '47!

Pa worked the second shift at Cudahy's Ladish foundry and left a little after 11:00 Tuesday night, January 28. He remembered a light snow. The weather service had predicted a little over an inch. Pa had no problem getting home. The streetcars were running, and the men of the bureau of street sanitation were busy sanding the streets. When the snow ended around 3 am the next day, the bureau cancelled plans to mount plows on the garbage trucks and opted to continue the scheduled coal ash and rubbish pick-ups.



"Jokey" picture from '47
Grandma is with the shovel, my aunt Elsie (being lazy) and Skipper the pooch. Pa did the actual shoveling.



Surprise! Snow began falling again just after morning rush hour and just after the school day began. By mid-morning, 60-mile-an-hour winds created The Blizzard of '47. Pa recalled that his streetcar was able to make it to Cudahy for his second shift job, but to get home he'd have to walk.

The department of public works realized that between sanding the streets and hauling the rubbish, the crews had been working 17 hours straight. Everyone was sent home to rest, to return for plowing at 10 that night. At the end of their shift, most of the workers ended up snowbound, as were the streetcars. So Pa had to "hoof it." He made it home just before dawn.

At least he didn't have to spend a day or two in a streetcar as some others did. Remarkably, I couldn't find any reports of power outages, so the electric-powered streetcars were able to maintain a measure of warmth. Conductors were able to corral kids and their sleds to help supply food. Newspaper deliveries were impossible, so the evening *Milwaukee Journal* was sent by two skiers to the Capital Drive offices of WTMJ radio. The news of the day was read over the radio.

Much like the 1870 blizzard in Iowa and Minnesota, the total snowfall amount of the Blizzard of '47 (over two days) was 16-and-one-half-inches. Friday morning the clean up began. There were 3,400



My Aunt Alda "all adrift"
Pa took the pictures (1947)

shovelers hired, and Pa was among them. The Ladish plant had closed and the third-shift was held over to keep the furnaces going, so Pa figured “sure, I’ll shovel.” What they were paid he couldn’t remember. Saturday, February 1, 1947, the Milwaukee Common Council met in emergency session to purchase new plows to replace the old plows that had been purchased in an emergency session after the blizzard of 1924.



Here would be a good place to salute Frank Schmidling, groundskeeper and general handyman at the St. Francis Seminary. According to Msgr. Peter Leo Johnson’s book, *Halcyon Days*, during August before the ‘47 blizzard, Schmidling had replaced his horse team with a tractor, which enabled him to plow the roads and driveways during the ‘47 blizzard.

Businesses and schools were re-opened by the next Monday, and full transit resumed service by Wednesday, although the side streets wouldn’t be cleared until March. The total financial hit in lost wages and economic activity was 75 million dollars (\$800 million in today’s money). There were five deaths reported.

Staircase all shoveled at 828 E. Linus St. in Bay View

P. S. I was working for a company on East Capitol Drive when the April blizzard of ‘73 struck. Everything was stuck, and I had to walk back home. When I got through the door (and it was a struggle), the first thing Pa said to me was: “Now you know!”

The St. Francis Neighborhood of Town of Lake Becomes a City in 1951

by Anna Passante

After World War II, Milwaukee launched an aggressive annexation program to expand the footprint of its city and had its sights on Town of Lake. Officials of Town of Lake took this threat seriously. In 1951, Town of Lake incorporated a small section (2.9 square miles) of the town as the City of St. Francis, which included the Lakeside Power Plant. There had been two other unsuccessful attempts at incorporation in 1928 and 1948, but this time the new city would meet the required population density.

John and Elinor Grabske and Art Wier went to Papa’s Market on St. Francis Avenue one Saturday morning to get a roll of butcher paper. The couple then went door-to-door in the St. Francis neighborhood to collect signatures from residents, as well as donations from those who shared the Grabskes’ dream of incorporation. “They all contributed, because they figured that it was a worthwhile cause for a community to establish its identity from a big city,” said Grabske. The couple collected over 300 signatures and \$800 in donations, enough to pay for an election that would determine the question of incorporation.

Henry Rajchel, Town of Lake clerk, and Fred Schoedorf, town treasurer, drove to Madison and petitioned for the city. On July 24, 1951, an election was held. A total of 1,069 voted for incorporation and 329 were opposed.

The original butcher paper is in safe keeping in the St. Francis Historical Society archive. The historical society has eight display cabinets in the St. Francis Civic Center rotunda that tell the story of the city’s past. A photocopy of the butcher paper is on display in the “City of St. Francis” cabinet.



This display cabinet in the St. Francis Civic Center rotunda contains a replica of the butcher paper containing signatures of residents who signed the butcher paper supporting the incorporation of the St. Francis neighborhood of Town of Lake. (Note: The blue “banner-like” strip across the top in this photo is the light coming into the clerestory windows located across from the display cabinets.)

First Holy Communion

By Karen Gersonde

First Holy Communion in our family was a cause to have a huge family celebration. We belonged to Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish in St. Francis in the 1960s, where my brother, Glenn, and I also attended grade school for eight years. All of our neighborhood friends also attended Sacred Heart School. We were all close in age, and it was nice to walk to and from school with our friends, since we lived close by the school on East Crawford Ave.

First Holy Communion occurred in May when we were in second grade. I remember preparing in religion class for this big day, months in advance of the celebration. We were schooled on what this sacrament signified, what the host represented, and the meaning of having Jesus enter into our lives. After baptism, this was the second sacrament to receive in the Catholic Church.



My brother, Glenn, received his First Holy Communion in May 1960. I received my First Holy Communion in May 1963. As both of our parents came from large families, my parents would host our communion parties at our house, which was not big at all. They would set up tables in our small basement with a large buffet for all to eat. People could then either sit upstairs and eat, or eat in the basement, or sit outside and enjoy the nice May weather.

We had a lot of cousins, so we would play outside, ride bikes, or maybe play ball in the street. That is, after I took off my communion dress. I liked my dress. It was very pretty, but it was so itchy and scratchy. Plus, we had to wear tights, which I was not used to. So, after all the photos were taken, it was nice to take the dress off. Sometimes my dad would take us kids into the woods for a walk, just to give the grownups time for themselves. They played cards, enjoyed adult beverages, which were plentiful, or sit outside and socialize. It was a great time for all.

One part of this celebration, which I liked, was all of the holy gifts that you received for this special day. Being a girl, I received many beautiful cross necklaces, rosaries, bibles, and other holy items. To this day, I still wear my cross necklaces that I received back then. I have always treasured them.

Having over 20 cousins, we attended a lot of First Holy Communion parties in the 1960s. Some were held at halls, because there were so many people, and others were simple parties at the relatives' homes. Plus, we attended all of the communion parties for our neighborhood friends. All made for great memories.



Top: May 1960, Glenn Glenn Gierzycki celebrated his First Holy Communion.

Above: Karen Gierzycki Gersonde in her communion dress of the day of her First Holy Communion in 1963.

Right: Father Weber in a procession during Glenn's First Holy Communion procession in May 1960.



I still practice my faith every Sunday. I do miss Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish. My brother, Glenn, was lucky enough to have his First Communion in the old church. It was then torn down, and I had my First Holy Communion in the new school and church. I wish I had more photos of my First Holy Communion day. I don't know what happened to them, but I know my dad took a lot. But at least I found some photos from Glenn's special day. They bring back such good memories of all the wonderful times we had in the month of May!

Thank you to those who gave a donation along with the renewal form!!

General Fund

Adams, Ron & Joy
Barney, Chris & Pam
Borland, Randy
Brickner, Donald
Buttke, Chris
Drehfal, Bill and Mary
Duffey, Diane
George, George & Phyllis
Gersonde, Karen
Gostomski, Carol
Hallfeld, Mary Robert
Hemple, James
Herzfeld, Susan
Hetzl, David
Howell, Ann
Hughes, Julie
Janiszewski, John
Javorek, Tom & Betty
Klug, Ray & Donna
Kreuser, Deb & Dave Knight
Matthew, Jim & Kathy
Mertz, Jack & Jennifer

New Assisi Archives
Perszyk, Jim & Barb
Raclaw, Stanley & Penny
Ramponi, George
Rhoe, Beverly
Rowan, Bonnie
Schandel, Janis
Staats, Susan
Thompson, Ed
Wesner, Jay
Weir, Richard
Wojtecki, Dennis & Carol
Zajackowski, John

Cemetery Fund

Adams, Ron & Joy
Barney, Chris & Pam
Duffey, Diane
Gostomski, Carol
Grosenick, Paula
Hallfeld, Mary Robert
Hempel, James
Herriges, Rose
Herzfeld, Susan
Hetzl, David
Klug, Ray & Donna
Kreuser, Deb & Dave Knight
Rhoe, Beverly
Thompson, Ed
Voltner, Ralph & Ava
Wesner, Jay
Weir, Richard



Thank you Juliet Hills for
your enjoyable presentation
at our annual January
membership meeting. Juliet
talked about children's
authors with Wisconsin
connections.



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

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Newsletter

Anna Passante

Mark Your Calendar

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.

March 16, 2024

April, 20, 2024

May 18, 2024

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

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