



# BAY VIEW Historian



VOLUME 2024, NO. 1

[www.bayviewhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.bayviewhistoricalsociety.org)

SPRING 2024

## Christ Church To Receive Landmark Status

BY RON WINKLER

Christ Church, 915 E. Oklahoma Avenue will be the Bay View Historical Society's (BVHS) 2024 landmark. The ceremony will be held on Saturday, June 15<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 pm. The event is free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served.

BVHS Landmarks Historian Ron Winkler and BVHS President Margaret Herzfeld will present the plaque. Christ Church will be the BVHS's twenty-ninth landmark. The Beulah Brinton House, which has been the Society's headquarters since 2005, was the Society's inaugural landmark in 1983.

### Congregation Formed 1895

The first Christ Church was built in 1896 at 2644 S. Pine Avenue on the northeast corner of Russell Avenue and Pine Avenue. That church still stands, but is now addressed as 2644 S. Pine Avenue. The church was expanded several times as the congregation grew, but by 1939, the congregation had outgrown this location. A new church was then built at 915 E. Oklahoma Avenue.

On February 17, 1895 Reverend Henry Noehren, of Zion Evangelical Church, 1424 W. Greenfield Avenue began holding services in the old Odd Fellows Hall on the corner of Kinnickinnic and Potter. A small group of German speaking people attended these services and decided to organize as a congregation. Rev. Henry G. Niefer, a recent graduate of Eden Theological Seminary was sent to meet with the group on July 1, 1895. On September 10, 1895, the nine charter members named their mission church "Deutsche Evangelische Christus Gemeinde" which in English means "German Evangelical Christ Church."

All services and church business was conducted in German. This was in keeping with the trend of Bay View's other German parishes which were St. Lucas Evangelical Lutheran Church, St. Augustine Catholic Church and Bay View Bethel. This section of Bay View west of the Chicago Northwestern Railroad tracks was settled mainly by Germans, in contrast to the east side of the tracks where residents were from Great Britain.

The members purchased land on the northeast corner of Pine and Russell and area builder John Wink of Wink Brothers Builders was paid \$2198 to build the church. Construction began immediately, with the cornerstone being laid on December 1,

1895, the first Sunday of Advent. The wooden clapboard Gothic revival edifice was dedicated on February 23, 1896.



*The original Christ Church was built in 1896 at 2644 S. Pine Avenue.*

### Growth

Two years later, the congregation purchased the adjacent lot to the east and spent \$1500 to construct a wooden clapboard Queen Anne style parsonage. The Niefer Family moved into the home November 1, 1898. That house still stands at 812 E. Russell Avenue.

Church membership grew, requiring expansion. In 1908, Bay View architect Peter M. Christiansen was selected to design an addition for \$8000. Dedication was on Sunday, September 27, 1908. Prosperity continued so that in 1914, the church was refurbished. The Ladies' Aid Society donated money for a new pipe organ as part of the renovation.

During World War I the congregation changed its name to Christ Evangelical Church in keeping with a nationwide trend to eliminate German references.

There were more than 600 members when the congregation celebrated its 25th anniversary on September 20, 1920. The congregation was also debt free, having paid off the mortgages incurred by the 1908 and 1914 improvements.



*The original Christ Church was expanded in 1908.*

### Triple 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

A triple 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary was celebrated on September 15, 1935. The three events commemorated were, 1) the founding of the congregation, 2) Pastor Niefer's ordination and 3) Pastor Niefer's years of service to the congregation. The congregation gave Pastor Niefer an automobile as a sign of appreciation. Sadly, a little over a year later, on December 4, 1936, Pastor Niefer died.

Rev. Albert Gonser was called as Christ Church's second pastor; he began his ministry on April 4, 1937. As membership continued to grow, more space was needed. Plans were made to purchase adjacent properties and build a larger church. However, the Hungarian Evangelical and Reformed Church, founded in 1928, inquired about purchasing the property. The Hungarian Church purchased the church and parsonage for \$12,000 on April 24, 1938.

### New Location

Christ Church went back to the drawing board and purchased property on the southeast corner of Lenox and Oklahoma for \$15,650. Local architect Hugo C. Haeuser was chosen to design a limestone English style Gothic revival structure. Ground breaking was held on April 21, 1940 and the cornerstone was laid on June 30, 1940. The congregation moved into the partially completed building on November 3, 1940 so that the Hungarians could move into the old Christ Church on Pine and Russell.

It was estimated that the new building and contents would cost \$75,000.00, and that estimate proved to be correct. The adjacent house to the south of the parish at 3114 S. Lenox Street was purchased for Rev. Gonser's parsonage.

There was much to celebrate when the congregation held its Golden Anniversary gala in 1945 with meetings, services and a banquet.

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## Membership

\$20 Individual/\$17 Seniors (Age 65+)

\$30 Household/\$25 Senior Household

\$30 Non-Profit/Small Business

\$55 Corporate

Philanthropic Levels:

\$100 Friend

\$500 Leader

\$1,000 Patron

\$2,500+ Benefactor

**Bay View Historical Society**  
2590 S. Superior Street, Bay View, WI 53207  
[www.bayviewhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.bayviewhistoricalsociety.org)

Bay View Historical Society is a non-profit organization with 501(c)3 status operating for educational purposes.

*The Bay View Historian is published four times a year by The Bay View Historical Society.*

## President's Message

As we begin to step into the vibrant bloom of spring, I am excited to share with you the latest updates and highlights from our ongoing efforts.

I would like to extend a special word of thanks to each of you who contributed to our Annual Appeal. As of the beginning of January, we have received \$8,803 in donations. Your generosity has been nothing short of inspiring! Your donations will continue to play a crucial role in the success of our 2024 initiatives and overall financial health of The Bay View Historical Society.

I am pleased to share that we also had over 150 members renew their membership or join the Society, bringing in just shy of \$3,500. Thank you for encouraging your neighbors and friends to join! Keep spreading the word!

In late November, we decorated the house with garlands, bows, a Christmas tree, and other seasonal décor. A special thank you to Nancy Tawney and Susan Herzfeld for assisting me with decorating. We completed just in time for two different Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee tours to be held by Bill O'Brien. Both tours were well attended and educated participants about Warren and Beulah Brinton, the BB house, Bay View, and the Historical Society. Thank you, Bill, for leading a wonderful event!

In January, the Archives committee reached a very important milestone. They officially have finished cataloging all the items in the BB House! The team has been working for 6+ years on this very large effort. All the items are now cataloged in museum software that allows us to keep track of them in a professional manner. Next the team hopes to determine which items can be grouped as exhibits and which might need to be passed on due to lack of historical relevance to Bay View. The house has a predefined amount of space and they hope to utilize it the best they can.

Do not forget that our trivia nights at The Sugar Maple continue to occur on the last Wednesday of every odd month (March 27, May 29, July 31) at 7pm. We also continue to hold our open houses the first Saturday of every month from 1-4pm.

Our committees continue to be hard at work planning events for 2024. Watch future Historians, your emails and Facebook for official event announcements!

Best,

Margaret Herzfeld

## Archives News

BY KATHY MULVEY

The Archives recently received from John Ebersol a large photograph, taken from the air, of the Milwaukee Port. It is roughly two feet high and seven feet wide. Then, Jean Waldo volunteered to pay for having the photo professionally cleaned and framed. The striking photo now hangs on the wall at the top of the stairs. Check it out!

Also, we have decided we will no longer accept donations of the Bay View High School annuals. We have all the yearbooks we can handle, and people can still buy copies for \$5 each.

## Building House Histories: Discovering Digital and In-Person Resources

BY GRACE PELISEK

Have you ever wanted to learn about the history of your Bay View home? Join us at the Beulah Brinton house to discover what resources are available to you, as well as how to navigate and interpret valuable sources of information such as census records, county property records, and more!

**Date & Time:** Wednesday, May 22 • 6-7:00pm

**Location:** The Beulah Brinton House  
2590 S. Superior St. Milwaukee, WI 53207



*The Will to Give*

Have you thought of including the Bay View Historical Society in your will? The Brinton House is 151 years old. Its presence is a Bay View treasure documenting times past. This house and the work of the Bay View Historical Society will continue for generations to come through the generosity of its members and friends. Please consider naming the Bay View Historical Society as one of the beneficiaries in your will. Doing so will ensure that the resources needed to preserve and maintain the Brinton House will be available and the house will remain a landmark in this community. For more information, please write to: [BayViewHistoricalSociety@gmail.com](mailto:BayViewHistoricalSociety@gmail.com)





## August Walk to Feature Southwestern Border

BY RON WINKLER

This year's Bay View Historical Society (BVHS) annual August Walk will be the Southwestern Border Walk. It will be held on Saturday, August 3rd, starting and ending at Christ Church, 915 E. Oklahoma Avenue. Registration will be at 9:00 am and the walk will begin at 9:30 am. The walk will be led by BVHS members Ron Winkler and Sean Regan.

Cost will be \$5.00 for members and \$10.00 for nonmembers. Anyone purchasing a membership that day will be admitted for \$5.00. Each participant will receive a copy of the new Southwestern Border walk brochure. The Southwestern Border brochure will complete the series of nine walking tours designed to help Bay Viewites and visitors gain an appreciation of Bay View's history, architecture and lifestyle.

The borders of the walk form an "L." The southern section is bounded by Oklahoma Avenue on the north, Morgan Avenue on the south, the Lake Parkway (Wisconsin Highway 794) on the east and 6th Street on the west. The western portion extends west from Howell Avenue to 6th Street between Oklahoma Avenue on the south and Russell Avenue on the north.

Bitter battles were fought between the town of Lake and Bay View's alderman Paul Gauer to annex the area south of Oklahoma Avenue. The town didn't want to lose its land or tax base, but town residents wanted to

obtain the same amenities enjoyed by their neighbors in Bay View. When these areas were annexed piecemeal between 1922 and 1929 they became part of not only Milwaukee, but also Bay View.



*The well-preserved Goelz farmhouse still stands at 3273 S. Clement Avenue.*

Most of the homes were built after 1925, but there are some old farmhouses that date to the late 19th century. The majority of the homes are duplexes, Bungalows and Tudor revival homes along with a

generous sprinkling of Cape Cod, Colonial revival and Mediterranean homes.

We will find a number of churches (Christ Church, Unity Lutheran, Lutheran Chapel of the Cross, and St. Luke's Episcopal) and schools (Humboldt Park and Parkside School of the Arts).



*The Mediterranean Kleczka house is at 529 E. Oklahoma Ave.*



*The old Nash, American Motors, Chrysler plant is at 3280 S. Clement Avenue.*



PLEASE JOIN US FOR THE  
BAY VIEW HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
2024 ANNUAL DINNER

## "WHAT WE DO TODAY BECOMES THE HISTORY OF TOMORROW"

Saturday, April 27, 5:30pm, South Shore Yacht Club



FEATURING A PRESENTATION BY  
**BRADLEY J. WILES, PhD.**  
"For What We Do Today Becomes the  
History of Tomorrow": A History  
of the Bay View Historical Society

Bradley Wiles, PhD. will present a discussion of his recently completed dissertation detailing the emergence of the Bay View Historical Society as part of a wider elevation of history and heritage activity in the wake of the 1976 American Bicentennial celebration. The analysis tracks developments that influenced the BVHS's creation and growth over four decades (1979-2015), focusing on its primary activities, goals, and pursuits, and how it communicated its self-assigned or assumed roles. Wiles was also interested in bringing together the BVHS story to provide a resource that current and future members can refer to, critique, and expand as the organization continues its mission.

### Wine & Spirits Pull & Silent Auction

Love a game where you are guaranteed to win?  
Time to try your luck at the 2024 Annual Dinner.  
For a \$20 donation, you are guaranteed to take home a  
wine or spirit valued at or over \$20.\* Sprinkled in will be  
bottles valued well over your donation amount.  
\*Participants must be 21 or older

### Music by Michael Bootzin

Cost: \$85/person

REGISTER AND PAY FOR THE  
ANNUAL DINNER IN THE  
BVHS SHOP AT  
[www.bayviewhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.bayviewhistoricalsociety.org)

Braised Short Rib, Salmon Piccata  
or Mushroom Napoleon  
Please let us know of any dietary requirements.

Questions? Contact us at:  
[Communications@bayviewhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:Communications@bayviewhistoricalsociety.org)



## Kodachrome Milwaukee

ADAM LEVIN  
Puddler's Hall • March 30 • 2pm

Explore long-lost and never-before-seen images of downtown, Mayfair Mall's Ice Chalet, Brady Street, the Mitchell Park Domes, Milwaukee County Stadium, and much, much more. Introduced by Kodak in 1935, Kodachrome quickly became popular with professional and amateur photographers in the years after World War II. Countless Kodachrome slides now lie neglected and discarded in attics and basements like tiny time capsules just waiting to be rediscovered. Sharing more than 140 full-color photos from his own collection, Adam Levin, curator of the popular Old Milwaukee Facebook group, leads a stroll down memory lane into the Milwaukee of yesteryear.

RSVP at [www.bayviewhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.bayviewhistoricalsociety.org)



## Remembering Delia Molden

BY KAREN GERSONDE



Delia Molden (Nee Decesari) was my dear aunt. She was born and raised in Bay View, Wisconsin. The youngest of six children of Italian immigrant parents, Delia was born in January 1928. She passed away in December 2023, in Appleton, Wisconsin. She loved Bay View and missed it dearly as her life long journey took her to other parts of the United States. I was fortunate enough to visit her several times when she returned to Appleton in her final years. She was a very funny, witty, sometimes hilarious character, as much as she was kind, caring and a very loving individual. She loved her family and friends and held them dear to her heart. In one of my final conversations with her, we were reminiscing about the good times in Bay View that we had. She made a statement to me that I will always remember, as it kind of caught me off guard. She stated, "I always thought that I would live my whole life in Bay View. I never thought that I would leave."

But life did take Delia on a different route. While working a parttime job, Delia noticed Clarence Molden, and in 1950 they married. The following summer, their daughter, Susan, completed their little family. Delia became an elementary school teacher and spent most of her career in the Milwaukee Public Schools. After years in elementary classrooms, Delia became a reading specialist in multiple MPS schools.

In retirement Delia and Clarence moved to Florida so Clarence could golf. Delia agreed to move "if" Clarence learned to ballroom dance. Thus followed many delightful years on dance floors. The two also spent a

number of years playing bocce. Additionally, Delia pursued several crafts, including Bunka, pine needle

basket weaving and making mink teddy bears. Delia also volunteered many hours working at her parish's thrift store. Many summer road trips included visits with family and sight-seeing throughout the states. Clarence and Delia shared 70 years together prior to his passing in 2020.

So why this article on Delia Molden? Delia was a charter member of the Bay View Historical Society, 1979-1980. As soon as she learned that the Society was forming, she knew she had to join. She was always proud to be a member, even if she lived in Florida, and looked forward to receiving the Bay View Historical Newsletter. It kept her connected to the community that she loved so much. So, at heart, she never really left Bay View, Bay View was always a part of her. Delia, the world was a better place with you in it. My heart is broken over your passing more than you will ever know. Every time I look at Lake Michigan, Jones Island, or your childhood home on South Superior Street, I will always think of you. I know in spirit; you are back home now. Delia you may be gone but you will never be forgotten. You were the best auntie a person could ever ask for, and for that, I am grateful!



## Osher Institute Visitors

BY BILL O'BRIEN

The Osher Institute of UW-Milwaukee's School of Continuing Education sent us lifelong learners on two sunny Wednesdays in mid-December. The groups of 20 came to see The Brinton House at Christmas. The Christmas tree in the front parlor bay and red-and-gold seasonal décor throughout the place had been readied by Margaret Herzfeld and her mother.

We started the tour at the corner of Superior and Pryor, braving the cold wind for quick views towards the lake, the Iron Well, and the signal light at Superior and Russell. These framed Bay View's geography and the old south edge of the rolling mill.

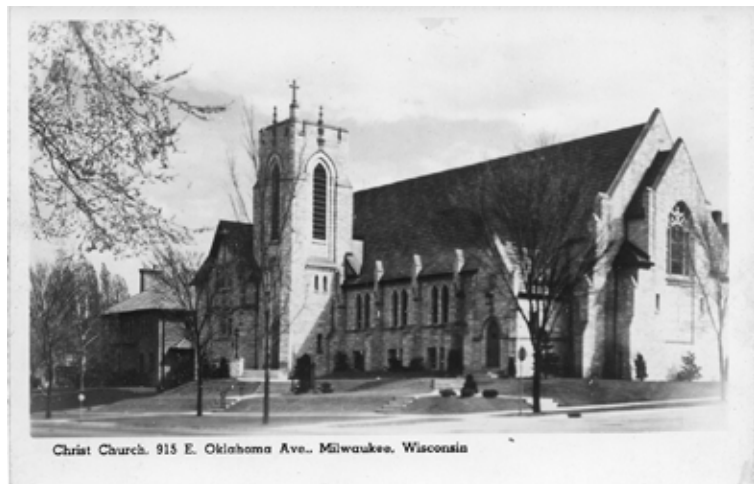
Next came my requisite vocabulary quiz, asking what the grassy strip between the sidewalk and the curb is called. The answer – verge – is rarely guessed, but acknowledged with "Ah, right." I always share that to explain the decorative lancet arch in the house's front gable. Attached just before the edge of the roof, such "gingerbread" ornament is often called a bargeboard, a synonym for vergeboard.

Our thorough circuit of the house proceeded with stories of the Society and its activities, Bay View's pioneer era, and the community's growth around the rolling mill; the Brintons' lives, travels, and family; and Beulah's many accomplishments and benefactions. We also surveyed changes to the house over the years, from the sunlit Lincrusta wainscot in the hall to the much-admired 1915-era remodeling of the kitchen. Our visitors left eager to return for a program, open house, or concert. Or, all of the above.



*One Osher participant had a poetic take on the verge: tree lawn. The best answer ever came from a Cub Scout who visited a decade ago, during a standard winter with lots of fluffy stuff on the ground. When I pointed out the verge and asked what it was, the little guy boomed "SNOW!"*

## Christ Church Continued from pg. 1



*The new Christ Church, 915 E. Oklahoma Avenue, was dedicated in 1941.*

## Further Expansion

When the new church was dedicated in 1941, it was felt that its size would fulfill the congregation's needs for many years. However, when World War II ended in 1945, more space was eventually required due to the post World War II baby boom. Initially, the congregation held two services and two Sunday School sessions each Sunday to relieve crowding.

In 1957, a Long-Range Planning Committee was appointed. On June 14, 1964, its plans were presented and accepted at a special congregational meeting. A double-level Christian education and administrative addition was built on the adjacent site to the south containing the parsonage. The parsonage was razed and replaced with the purchase of the Mediterranean home at 923 E. Oklahoma Avenue across the alley to the east of the church.



*The Oklahoma Avenue Parsonage, 923 E. Oklahoma Avenue, was purchased in 1969.*

Ground breaking for the new education addition was held on May 26, 1968. Due to torrential rain on that day, a symbolic indoor ceremony was held. A bushel basket of earth was taken from the new site and each dignitary turned over a shovelful of soil. The cornerstone was laid on June 1, 1969 and the Dedication Service was held on June 8, 1969. Two weeks later, the newly renovated and expanded organ was dedicated on Sunday, June 22, 1969.

In 1970, the following year, the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary Celebration was held with appropriate ceremony and expression of gratitude for the blessings since 1895, with an emphasis on the most recent from the previous year.

In 1995 Christ Church celebrated one hundred years, which we will discuss next time.



## Passing, Seen

BY BILL O'BRIEN

I think of the junction of East Texas Avenue and the Shore Drive turnaround as an ideal viewing platform for the annual air show. It rarely crosses my mind that the little lawn jutting east from the bluff is planted atop a hydraulic workhorse.

Milwaukee's newest "raw water pumping station" when it was proposed in the late 1950s, the Texas Avenue Pumping Station drew water from an intake crib 7,800 feet out in Lake Michigan and pumped it more than 2½ miles southwest to be purified at the "inland filtration plant" on Howard Avenue. The initial capacity of its 4 pumps totaled 140,000 gallons per day. A first infusion of chlorine was made at the station, and alum, carbon, lime, and fluoride added at the filtration plant.



Constructed at the height of the Cold War, the station has a 2-foot-thick concrete roof and no windows, guards against "atom blasts." Water Works Superintendent Arthur Rynders was careful to note that the facility would be "bomb resistant," rather than "bombproof." (1) He assured the public that sufficient clean water would be available in case of a catastrophe, as well as to fight fires and "to wash atomic contamination into the sewers." The station came online in May 1962, months after it was visited by 250 delegates to an American Water Works Association convention held at the Schroeder Hotel. (2)

The water system outlasted the Soviet threat, only to be struck by a microscopic invader that killed more than 60 and sickened thousands in April 1993. The source of the cryptosporidium protozoa that compromised the filtration plant has never been ascertained. Whether caused by agricultural runoff, snowmelt into the lake, or a sewage discharge, the crisis eventuated more than half a billion dollars in improvements, including stream monitoring, a 5,400-foot extension of the intake line, ozone treatment, and chloramine disinfection. A phosphorus compound to control pipe erosion keeps now lead from leaching into the water.

Note that online maps label the pumping station as Texas Rock, a name properly associated with a sandstone reef 500 feet offshore. Visible beyond the breakwater when lake levels are low, it has long been a navigational hazard, earning a reputation as a "perennial prop buster." (3)

(1) *Milwaukee Journal*, August 11, 1960 • (2) *Today's Hilton Milwaukee City Center*. Ibid., Sept. 29, 1961 • (3) Ibid., July 9, 1965  
Thanks to John Gurda for piquing my interest in this overlooked behemoth.



## Bay View "Mystery" Photo

We have many photos that have been donated to the archives without any information or content. Please take a look at the photo and tell us if you know the "who, what, when, where and why" of this photo. Please send any responses to jsarg3131@aol.com. Thank you!

## Is it Time to Renew Your Membership?

Please look at your Bay View Historian mailing label to see when your membership will expire.

All yearly membership terms run from January 1 thru December 31. Any new memberships will be current through the end of the calendar year (one year plus pro-rated months). Members receive our newsletter, *The Historian*, with interesting articles and the latest information on all our events as well as discounts at a variety of Bay View merchants.

Thanks for supporting the programs of the Bay View Historical Society!

### PLEASE RENEW MY MEMBERSHIP IN THE BAY VIEW HISTORICAL SOCIETY

#### Membership Dues

- ☐ Individual.....\$20
- ☐ Household.....\$30
- ☐ Senior (65 or older).....\$17
- ☐ Senior Household.....\$25
- ☐ Nonprofit/Small Business.....\$30
- ☐ Corporate.....\$55

#### Philanthropic Levels:

- ☐ \$100 Friend ☐ \$1,000 Patron
- ☐ \$500 Leader ☐ \$2,500+ Benefactor

☐ Also enclosed is a tax deductible contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Enclosed is my check in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to:  
**Bay View Historical Society**

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Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ Please contact me! I'd like to volunteer for a project or committee.
- ☐ Please save a tree and send **The Historian** to the email address above.

SEND YOUR MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TO:

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Attn: Membership  
2590 S. Superior Street  
Bay View, WI 53207





## Prohibition Pummeled Their Restaurant-Tavern, but Slovenian Family Prospered

As you loosen up in the At Random Cocktail Lounge, maybe after a stiff Old Fashioned, you might hear the walls murmuring “Na zdravje.” That’s Slovenian for “cheers.” Or if you listen really hard (after a second Old Fashioned) you might hear the walls whisper “Kol’kor kaplic tol’ko let.” That’s Slovenian for “let us be blessed with as many years as there are drops in this glass.”

For a couple of decades – about 100 years ago -- the tongue spoken in the building was Slovenian. In those days, the corner of Russell and Delaware was home to a simple workingman’s saloon, a world away from the Naugahyde and swag lights of At Random. Starting in 1918, Slovenian immigrants Mike and Frances Kirn (nee Androjna) ran a bar-restaurant at that corner. The Kirns were from the Alpine farming area of Austria-Hungary (later called Yugoslavia, now Slovenia).

Frances Kirn, who came to the US at age 16, once said that raw necessity drove her here: “It was not so good for my parents in Europe at that time with a houseful of children to feed.” That particular streetcorner was a perfect location for the Kirns’ business. Just to the north was the now-gone Harbor View neighborhood, thick with Slovenians. Like other immigrants, the Slovenians stuck to each other for comfort; the Kirns paid monthly dues to “Sloga” (Unity), which held social and athletic events and helped with the cost of medical care and burials.

The tavern remained in the Kirn family into the mid-1950s. By that time, the assimilation of immigrants’ children and grandchildren had made Slovenian a mostly-forgotten language. But in the early years of the 20th Century, you would have gotten blank stares if you spoke English in the establishment.



In about 1922, the Kirn family proudly posed for a photo in front of the building. That was four years after they went into business – and two years after the start of Prohibition. The Volstead Act must have come as a shock. Still, the Kirns seemed to be doing OK. The photo shows Mike and Frances Kirn, their two daughters, and “Louie,” a relative of Mike’s, posing proudly in front of the restaurant and, ahem, “soft drink parlor.” (Missing from the photo is the Kirns’ son Louis, who went on to become a Navy dive-bombing hero in World War II and, later, a rear admiral commanding the Atlantic carrier fleet).

The Kirn family made sure that the 1922 photo included their pride and joy: a 32-horsepower Maxwell

car. It was proof of the prosperity that they had won as the result of never-ending work by all hands, children to adults. “Sure, it was hard,” Frances Kirn recalled when interviewed at age 86. “I’d be sweating away in that kitchen, 150 degrees it was in there sometimes, but I was young, I could take it. Sure, we had tough times, but we were also brought up hard in the old country. “I don’t care how hard I work, so long as my children are learning the best that they can. You see, I never had the chance – those years in old Austria were so very bad. We were tied to the land; we went hungry those years when the land was poor for growing.”

That shiny Maxwell cost the Kirns about \$1,000, at a time when a factory worker at the huge Milwaukee Iron Company rolling mill – just across the street -- might make 50 cents an hour. Prohibition did not expire until 1933, but in Bay View it had never taken hold in the first place.

Ironworking being hot work, growlers of beer from the Mike Kirn establishment made their way to the mill. (Michael Kirn, in solidarity with the ironworkers, sold the Socialist newspaper, The Milwaukee Leader.)

Mary Zahn Hanin, granddaughter of Mike and Frances, recalls: “Many years ago I sat at a table in the At Random bar and listened as my mom (Frances Zahn) pointed to a place on the floor where a moonshine spigot ran up from the basement. It was her job to push it down and put a loose floorboard over it when they heard the feds were coming. [Frances would have been 11 years old in 1922.]

“The whole neighborhood smelled of home brew, she said -- it was her impression that payoffs were being made by tavern owners to keep the law at bay. There was no way the feds did not know what was going on! “Mike and Frances were friends with the Italian bar owner across the street, who would somehow find out when the feds were in the neighborhood. He would then alert Mike, and down went the spigot. However, on one day, they were not alerted in time and grandpa was arrested and taken to the House of Correction.”

Bobby Tanzilo, of OnMilwaukee.com, found a newspaper story from May 1930 reporting that Mike Kirn, operator of a “soft drink parlor and restaurant,” had been caught by Prohibition agents making beer; he was sent to the House of Correction for six months and fined \$200. Frances Kirn got her husband’s sentence shortened by trading on the family’s main asset: the hearty food they cooked.

Mary Zahn Hanin says: “Mom said she was told that our grandma, who spoke broken English, met with ‘important people,’ made them ‘a big dinner’ and voila, Grandpa was released. Mom took that to be code for a culinary payoff; there was no more trouble after that.”

The granddaughter continues: “As was the fashion, there was a separate entrance, away from the bar, for the women. Our grandparents also owned a farm in St. Francis where they raised chickens and produce. Grandma would wring the necks of the chickens to kill them, pluck their feathers and fry them up for the

tavern. Mom said there was always free sausage or cheese or bread at the bar. As I recall, the chicken dinners were a nickel. Taverns were beholden to specific breweries [so-called “tied houses”], so patrons would only be served that brand of beer. In the case of our grandparents, it was Blatz.” The tavern was not the only place where the Kirns’ food flowed.

The Kirns had a farm on Lake Drive that included the hilltop – once an alfalfa field -- where St. Francis High School is now located.



*Kirn Farmhouse on Lake Drive*

Nancy Dorlack, a granddaughter, recalls: “They raised pigs, geese, ducks, chickens – they all roamed around this big fenced-in area. There was a chicken coop where the chickens laid their eggs. They also had a large smokehouse; there would be big pieces of bacon hanging, and sausages made from the pigs. It smelled wonderful! Dozens of friends would gather at the farm for parties. Mountains of food -- mostly made in the basement of the farmhouse -- filled the long wooden tables set out in the garage (after the tractor was moved out). Blood sausage! Crispy black casings (pig intestines) stuffed with pork, rice, and pork blood, combined in a hand-cranked sausage machine. Potica! (Po-TEET-sah). A dessert: a thin-dough nutroll stuffed with walnuts, sugar, and spices. Homemade wine! Made with the old wooden grape press in the basement. Some of the grapes came from the farm’s own little vineyard. Raspberry schaum torte! The raspberries were fresh from the garden. After the feasting, Lake Drive motorists passing the farmhouse would hear women sweetly singing Slovenian folk songs in the back yard.”

Michael Zahn, grandson of Frances and Mike Kern, recalls his mother describing the ethnic makeup of Bay View in those years: “Mom [Frances Zahn] was annoyed when she read that [civil rights leader] Father Groppi had said he had empathy for minorities because he was, as an Italian in Bay View, a minority himself. My mom said there were plenty of Italians! The Slovenians were the real minority in the neighborhood!”

Descendants of Mike and Frances Kirn, and family friends, contributed to this reminiscence. Thanks also to the Milwaukee County Historical Society magazine of Autumn 1976, and, of course, Dr. Google. Questions? Contact: MichaelZahn01@gmail.com

## Where in (Historical) Bay View?

BY RON WINKLER

Do you recognize this Bay View landmark? Look for the answer in the next issue of The Historian.



### Answer to last issue's quiz (Winter 2023):

Milwaukee Iron Company founder Eber Brock Ward laid out the streets of his company town and built modest one-story frame Italianate Puddler's cottages for his workers. Puddlers were the highly skilled men who manufactured the iron.

These four cottages in the 1000 block of East Russell Avenue were demolished in 1973 to make way for Michelle Manor, a senior living complex. The rows and rows of Puddler's cottages throughout Bay View disappeared long ago. Several groups of Puddler's cottages are still scattered throughout Bay View such as those at 2725, 2731 and 2735 South Superior Street.



## Calendar of Events

Please check the BVHS Website **BayViewHistoricalSociety.org** for new TBD events.

### BVHS Trivia Night at The Sugar Maple

Free trivia, with teams or individuals

Wednesday • March 27 • 7:00 pm

Women's History

Wednesday • May 29 • 7:00 pm

### Annual Dinner

South Shore Yacht Club

Saturday • April 27

5:30 cocktails/6:30 dinner

### Building House Histories: Discovering Digital and In-Person Resources

Beulah Brinton House,

Wednesday • May 22 • 6:00 – 7:00 pm

### Monthly Open House

Come visit us and discover something new!

1<sup>st</sup> Saturdays from 1:00 – 4:00 pm

Beulah Brinton House

Saturday • March 2

Saturday • April 6

Saturday • May 4

Saturday • June 1

### Bay View Gallery Night

Friday • May 31

### Parks Bike Ride

Saturday • June 9 • 2:00 pm

Saturday • September 8 • 2:00 pm

### BVHS Board Meetings

Board of Directors meetings are usually held the second Wednesday of the month at 6:30pm. The format is hybrid, meeting in-person at the Beulah Brinton House and via Zoom, and are open to members.

Wednesday • March 13 • 6:30pm

### Christ Church Landmark Dedication

Christ Church, 915 E. Oklahoma Ave.

Saturday • June 15 • 1:00 pm

### Adam Levin's Kodachrome Milwaukee

Puddler's Hall

Saturday • March 30 • 2:00 pm

### August Walk

Christ Church, 915 E. Oklahoma Ave.

Saturday • August 3

Registration at 9:00 am

Walk starts at 9:30 am