

Sites Associated with the St. Joseph Polish Community

Introduction

Between 1850 and 1920 huge numbers of people left Eastern Europe and came to the United States. This migration was fueled by the bottomless demand for cheap, unskilled labor in the emerging industrial cities – including St. Joseph, Missouri. Many of these immigrants came to the Midwest and found work in the packing houses. Like most of the Midwestern industrial cities, St. Joseph had a diverse population; one of the largest groups were Polish and Ukrainian Catholics.

This tour, which is available on Clio <https://theclio.com/tour/2273>, was created as part of a larger research project on the Eastern European Immigrant Community of St. Joseph undertaken as a mitigation stipulation under Sec. 106 of the National Preservation Act of 1966.

Sources: : Kimberly Schutte, “The Eastern European Immigrant Community of St. Joseph, Missouri, c. 1850-1950,”

<https://www.stjosephmo.gov/DocumentCenter/View/14841/Eastern-European-Immigrant-Community-of-St-Joseph-MO-PDF?bidId=>; Ran Abramitzky and Leah Boustan,

“Immigration in American Economic History,” *Journal of Economic Literature* 55:4 (Dec. 2017): 1311, 1313; Tara Zahra, *The Great Departure: Mass Migration from Eastern Europe and the Making of the Free World* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2017), 5, 68;

SS Peter & Paul Church



1. Introduction: Initially, the Poles, who were overwhelmingly Catholic, attended services at the Immaculate Conception Church. They were dissatisfied with the German-language liturgy and so in 1906 they purchased land at 20th and Messanie Streets facing Warsaw Street and built the “Polish Church,” Saints Peter and Paul.

2. Backstory and Context: The history of the Polish congregation dates back to at least May 1883 when Bishop John Hogan purchased the Willard Hall homestead for \$5,000. Hogan realized the need for a Roman Catholic Church to serve the needs of the mostly Eastern European residents who lived in the immediate area. Hogan established the Polish speaking parish of Saints Peter and Paul and brought the Reverend Wenceslaus Krsywonos to serve as pastor. Krsywonos, a native of Poland, had recently graduated from Conception Seminary and he served this new congregation from 1883 to 1895. Prior to the construction of the impressive church, the congregation worshipped at the Hall Home, which still stands within the church complex. In 1889, the parish had a congregation of 1,200.

The associated school was a sports powerhouse in the community for decades; unfortunately it closed in 1960 due to declining enrollments (at the same time as the school at St. Stanislaus was closed). The parish itself was closed in 1978 and merged with the Immaculate Conception Parish. The handcrafted altars from SS. Peter and Paul were relocated to Immaculate Conception. Today, the former Ss. Peter and Paul Church serves as the homebase for Mid-City Excellence.

3. Sources: Kimberly Schutte, “The Eastern European Immigrant Community of St. Joseph, Missouri, c. 1850-1950,” <https://www.stjosephmo.gov/DocumentCenter/View/14841/Eastern-European-Immigrant-Community-of-St-Joseph-MO-PDF?bidId=>; Nancy Sandehn, Architectural/Historic Inventory Survey Form. Saints Peter and Paul Roman Catholic Church, 1992; “The Four Parishes,” *The St. Joseph Herald*, Jan. 1, 1889.

4. Images



The Willard Hall house at SS. Peter & Paul



School building at SS Peter & Paul



SS Peter & Paul



SS. Peter & Paul



The SS Peter & Paul complex

Twin Spires (Immaculate Conception)



1. Introduction: In the 1870s, a large community of German Catholics called St. Joseph home. They formed the Immaculate Conception Parish and a substantial complex of four structures were built on South 10th Street. As the newer immigrants came to the city from Poland and other parts of Eastern Europe, initially they worshipped at Immaculate Conception. But they became dissatisfied with the German-language services and formed their own parish of SS. Peter and Paul on Messanie Street. When SS. Peter and Paul was closed in 1978; the alters from that church were installed at Immaculate Conception.

2. Backstory and Context: German speaking immigrants created the parish of Immaculate Conception and its complex of four structures on South 10th Street. The first baptism in the parish is recorded as occurring on Oct. 13, 1860. In 1868, the first Immaculate Conception church was erected on the site. The rectory and convent – the middle two of the four structures – were built in the 1870s, making them among the oldest structures in St. Joseph. The original church that stood on the site was quite modest and in 1906, the pastor, Father Linnenkamp suggested to the parish that a more impressive structure be built. The congregation raised \$35,000 and Linnenkamp added \$22,000 of his own money and the congregation turned to St. Joseph’s most famous architect, E.J. Eckel, to build the new church. The church was dedicated on January 16, 1910. What Eckel created is nothing less than a masterpiece of Gothic Revival architecture. At the time of its dedication, the News-Press described it: “The new Immaculate

Conception Church is regarded as the most artistic ecclesiastical building in the West. Its design is a modernized Gothic, in which the essentials of that style are preserved without obstructing the view of the main altar, as is generally the case in churches of pure Gothic design. The body of the building is of gray vitrified brick and the trimmings, tracery, and castings are of Bedford stone, the approaches being, however, of New Hampshire granite. The roof is of slate, supported by steel. . . The interior ornamentation is of stucco, supported by steel. The altars, stations, and other furnishings harmonize in design and scheme with the character of the building and the effect is charming. All is delicate, subdued, and sweet and the atmosphere of sanctity pervades. . . The chandeliers and brackets are of dull brass, while the sanctuary lamp is a wonderful bit of metal filigree done in gold. The pews, confessionals, communion railing and general woodwork are of oak. The altars are exquisite examples of the woodworkers' craft coated with white enamel and tipped with gold." Among its most striking elements are the stained-glass windows from Innsbruck, Austria depicting the life of Mary. The interior frescoes by Theodore Brash were completed in December 1916. The church towers over much of the city due to its location on a hill and the impressive 146-foot height of the spires; giving the site its local name, "Twin Spires."

From 1867, there was a school as part of the site; the structure on the southeast corner of 10th and Messanie Streets was once the school. In 1889, the school had an enrollment of about 400 students. In 1968 the Diocese of Kansas City/St. Joseph announced that it was considering the closure of the school due to low enrollment (at that time it had 120 students being taught by four nuns).

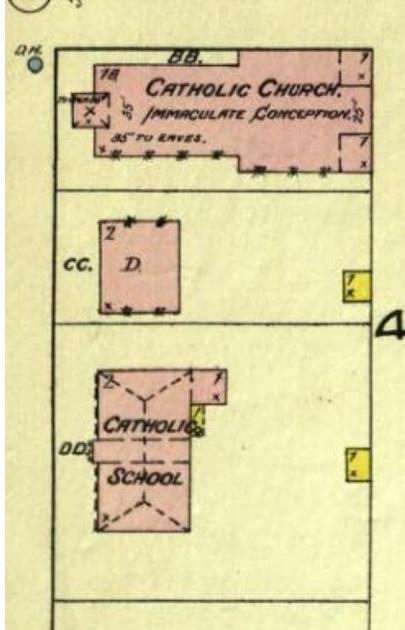
At the northeast corner of 10th and Angelique, where a parking lot is now located, was once the parish hall and also served as a part of the school. It was demolished in 1957.

In 1978, the parish of SS. Peter and Paul was closed and merged with Immaculate Conception; the new parish was renamed Queen of the Apostles. In 1992, the Catholic Diocese of Kansas City/St. Joseph decided to close the Queen of the Apostles parish and planned to demolish the four buildings of the complex. Community outcry and activism convinced the Diocese to deed the complex to the newly formed Twin Spires Inc. along with a grant of \$75,000. The grant was matched by the City of St. Joseph and the funds were utilized to rehabilitate the school building for use by a group working with the mentally challenged. For a time, the rectory served as a group home and the church itself was a popular wedding and event venue as well as a museum to the religious history of St. Joseph. Unfortunately, that was not the end of the story. Since that time, all of the structures have suffered badly from neglect and vandalism and their future is in real doubt. There are plans to convert the church into a Pro-Life shrine, but currently it is also deteriorating.

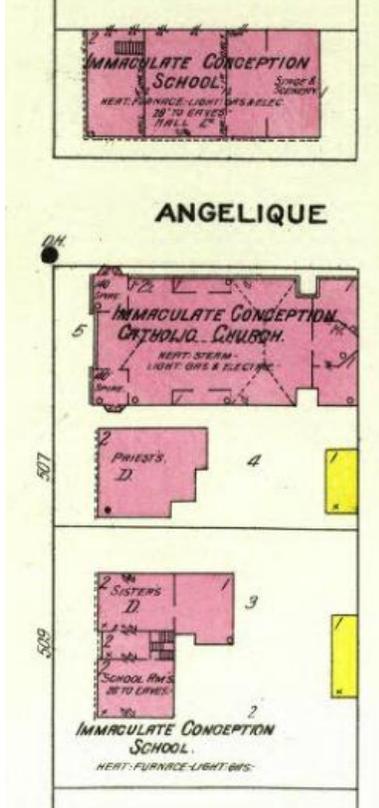
3. Sources: "The Four Parishes," *The St. Joseph Herald*, Jan. 1, 1889; "Subscriptions are Rolling In," *The Catholic Tribune*, Jan. 25, 1908; "Beautiful Church Ready for Worship," *St. Joseph News-Press*, Jan. 15, 1910; "MGR. Linnenkamp's Golden Jubilee," *St. Joseph News-Press*, March 19, 1914; "Jubilee for Church," *St. Joseph News-Press*, Oct. 8, 1935; "Study Possible Closing of Two Parochial Schools," *St. Joseph News-Press*, Feb. 1, 1968; Abby Trapp, "Twin Spires Stands Tall After More than a Century," *St. Joseph News Press*, Sept. 7, 2019;

4. Images:

1897 Sanborn Map – showing previous structure



1911 Sanborn Map – showing the expanded complex

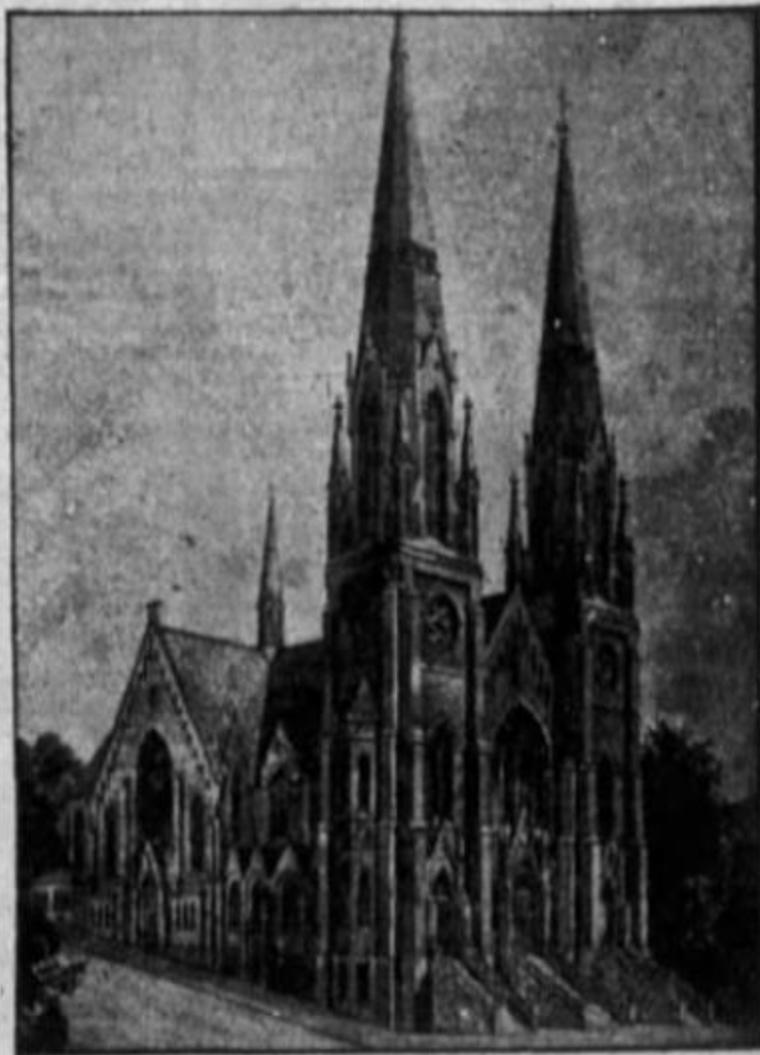


INTERIOR VIEW OF IMMACULATE CONCEPTION CHURCH.



View shows only transept, disclosing the large and beautiful art windows, also the sanctuary, pews, confessionals and stations. The furnishings harmonize with the Gothic style of architecture. —Photo by Higgins

Church to Observe Diamond Jubilee



On Sunday the Immaculate Conception Parish will begin a three-day celebration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of its establishment. Second oldest Catholic church in the city, the congregation has been organized since 1860 and has built three churches on the site at Tenth and Angellique streets. The picture above is the present Gothic structure which was completed in 1910. This replaced a brick church which was erected when a windstorm blew down the first frame structure before it was completed.

News Press, Oct. 8, 1935



Immaculate Conception



The buildings of the Immaculate Conception Complex



Buildings of the Immaculate Conception Complex showing the convent and school buildings

St. Stanislaus Church



1. Introduction: In the 19teens the Southside of St. Joseph was home to a large Polish-speaking community. These families wanted their own church and school. They built their new church at 515 Alabama and named the parish after St. Stanislaus, the Polish bishop-martyr. For several decades St. Stanislaus was an important center for the Polish community. By the 1970s, the Polish population has disbursed throughout the city and the church was sold.

2. Backstory and Context: By the turn of the 20th century, many of the Polish families who had previously lived in Goosetown and worshipped at SS. Peter & Paul had moved to the southside to be closer to their work in the packing houses. Andrzej Barzan petitioned Bishop Burke for permission to organize a parish in South St. Joseph. Once the permission was granted, they purchased land on Alabama Street, in close proximity to the streetcar tracks, and soon had built a combination church and school building; it opened in 1914. The *St. Joseph Journal* described it: “It consists of a basement and two stories. In the basement there is a very beautiful auditorium. On the first floor are located two classrooms, a newly-built chapel and club-rooms for the youth of the parish. The church proper is on the second floor.” The first priest assigned to the parish was Father Paul Michalak, who served for six years and was followed by Rev. Michael Dyminski who served the parish for a decade before ill health necessitated his resignation. Rev. Simon Kaczmarek and Rev. John Zielinski were the next two parish priests. The parish school was operated by the Felician Sisters. When it opened in 1914 it served 86 students, but by 1925, enrollment had grown to 145.

By the late 1930s, the congregation was shrinking. In 1960, the school closed and in 1973 the building sold to a Baptist congregation. Remaining parishioners shifted to St. James Church and school. By 2004, the building was once again abandoned and falling into disrepair. It was purchased by a developer and redeveloped to serve as apartments. Though it is still a multi-family residence, the original front door and the name in Polish remains.

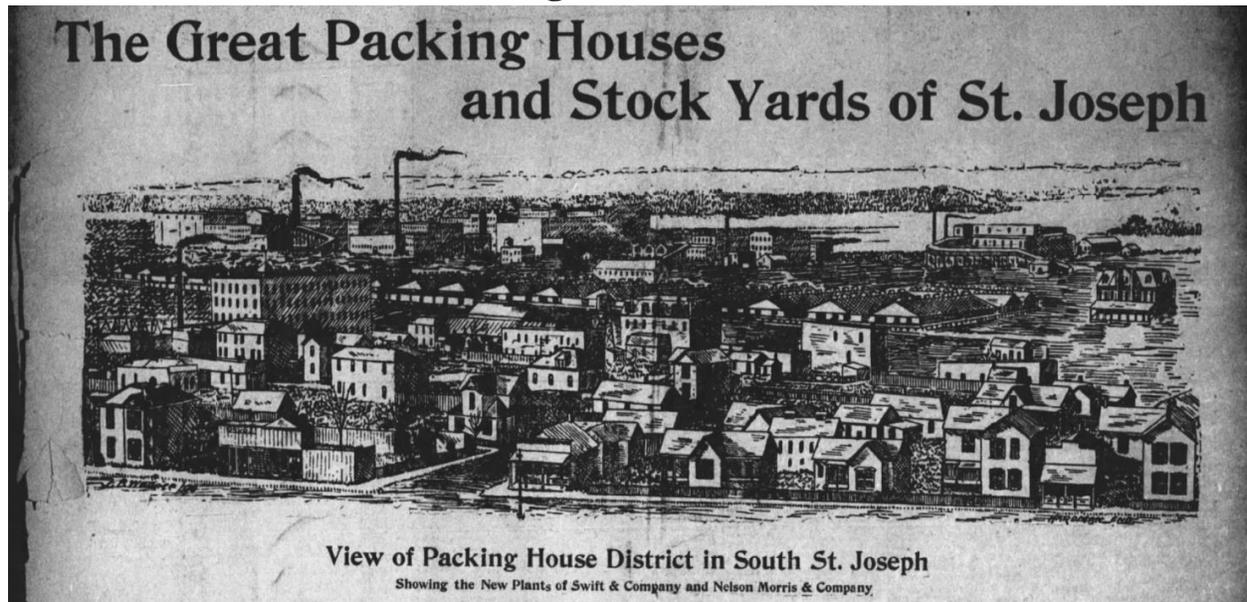
3. Sources: “St. Stanislaus Silver Jubilee,” *St Joseph Journal*, Oct. 20, 1939, pg. 1; “A bit about St. Stanislaus Parish History,” *St. Joseph News Press*, July 24, 1973, pg. 8; “Historic Church Turned into Homes,” *St. Joseph News Press*, July 6, 2004.

4. Images:



St. Stanislaus Church

Packing House District



1. Introduction: From the earliest days of St. Joseph history, meat packing has been an important component of the local economy. Many of the Polish immigrants worked in the packing houses. The district has a rich, and sometimes tragic history, marked by hard work and unspeakable tragedy. The Polish community was at the heart of this history. In May 1930, the Armour Packing House was ripped apart by an explosion killing 19 workers including Frank Wiczorek, the 40-year-old son of Polish immigrants. During the hey-day of the meat-packing industry in St. Joseph, many of the Polish workers lived in the modest residential neighborhoods surrounding the district creating a tight-knight community. As the plants closed, much of the unique character of the Polish district was lost.

2. Backstory and Context: From its inception, St. Joseph has benefited from its location at a transportation hub. This location facilitated the growth of many industries, but none more than the livestock industry. As early as 1846, John Corby was in the meat packing business. David Pinger operated the most successful of the early meat packing operations. These were located close to the Missouri River in the area where the historic downtown is now located. The Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad operated a stockyard facility close to its terminal on Walnut Street, a bit south of the main rail station during the 1860s. It functioned essentially as a holding yard for the hogs and cattle being shipped east.

As with everything else in the city, the Civil War disrupted the meatpacking and stockyard business. It took a bit of time after the end of hostilities to re-establish the trade, but Pinger did reopen his business, this time with new partners, William Zook and J.C. Waterman, both of whom were expansion minded.

Once St. Joseph had completed its railroad bridge across the Missouri River in 1873 business expanded and hogs arrived in the city from as far as 100 miles away. In that year, a

group of local businessmen decided that there was a real need for a formal stockyard so they created the Union Stock Yards Company. They worked to ensure that the processing of the animals happened in the city rather than having St. Joseph simply serve as a stopping off point. The Company leased five acres near the bridge close to the incoming rail lines. In its first year the new stockyard reported traffic of 69,000 hogs, 24,616 head of cattle, and 1,100 horses.

As St. Joseph entered the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Pinger & Co. remained the leading packing house; however, the Hax Brothers, the Connett Brothers, the Valley Packing Company, and the Henry Krug Packing Company all helped to make St. Joseph a hub of the livestock industry, primarily focusing on the slaughtering of hogs.

The St. Joseph Stockyards company, organized in November 1886, worked to facilitate the transshipment of cattle through the city. One of the primary movers in the creation of the new stockyards was James McCord, who had become rich in the wholesale grocery business. It was that business that made him acutely aware that the small meat processors were being pushed out of business by the large packers such as Armour and Swift, who could provide cheaper, more convenient processed meat. McCord knew that unless St. Joseph attracted the big companies, it would be left in the dust of the changing meat industry. In order to attract those companies, a major stockyards facility was necessary, hence, McCord's interest in the St. Joseph Stockyards Company. McCord took his proposal to Charles B. France, one of the city's leading bankers, and convinced him to put up \$500,000 in capital. Construction on the pens and the Livestock Exchange Building began in June 1887. This first Exchange building was three stories high and made of brick. Among the first directors of the Stockyards Company were John Donovan, Samuel Nave, Henry Krug Jr., Charles B. France, and J.B. McNeely. The souvenir booklet commemorating the opening of the second Livestock Exchange building described them as "men who not only enjoyed the confidence and respect of this section of the country, but men of ample capital, large business experience, and men whose names stood for strength and who had a reputation of bringing things to pass. In other words, every name connected with this enterprise had made a success in life, and not one of them ever made a failure in any business undertaking."

In December 1887 the more than 440-acre St Joseph Stockyards opened for business and six rail companies agreed to build spurs to the facility. But the success of the whole enterprise hinged on attracting major packing houses to St. Joseph and that proved to be a challenge. In return for building a processing facility on the site, meat packers were promised 80 acres at no charge. Despite this incentive, none of the major Chicago companies immediately agreed to locate in the new yards. Facing the loss of their investment, the stockholders decided to build a packing plant themselves, eventually leasing it to Allerton & Co. a small packing concern out of Chicago. In 1889, the City of St. Joseph loaned the Stockyard investors the funds to build a beef processing plant that Anchor Beef Packing Company then leased. Anchor failed three years later and a New York consortium that formed the St. Joseph Packing and Transportation Company purchased the facility.

Soon after this, the Stock Yard Company reorganized as the St. Joseph Stockyards and Terminal Company and that entity built a third packing plant. At this time, John Donovan, the President of the newly reorganized company, traveled to Chicago to meet with representatives from the major packing companies, but he did not succeed in convincing any of them to open

operations in St. Joseph. This lack of support from the major meatpacking companies and the financial turmoil of the mid-1890s resulted in the failure of all of the packing houses built by the stockyards, a financial setback that led the stockyards company to be placed into receivership.

The St. Joseph Stockyards sprang back to life in 1897 when Swift & Co., one of the nation's largest meat packing companies, purchased the majority of stock in the stockyards company. The company was then reorganized under the original name, the St. Joseph Stock Yards Company. Swift & Co. sold part of the controlling interest in the stockyards company to Nelson Morris & Co. and both packing companies began construction on large packing plants in the St. Joseph Stockyards complex. That same year, Hammond Packing Company signed an agreement to build an immense packing plant on the site. They had leased a smaller plant that was already in place, but the success led them to commit real resources to St. Joseph. The newly built plant had a daily capacity of 2,000 hogs, 800 cattle, and 200 sheep. It employed 1,000 workers. Armour & Co. purchased this facility in 1912. In 1898, in order to meet the needs of the expanded packing houses, the stockyards themselves were enlarged and improved. Under Swift's ownership, John Donovan was the day-to-day boss of the company. He was known in the city as the most consistent cheerleader for the stockyards and packing house industry.

In the period between 1897 and 1900, huge changes were made to the livestock business in St. Joseph. The Stockyards Company reorganized, three new packing houses were built under their aegis, the stockyards themselves modernized and enlarged – the plans done by E.J. Eckel, and a new Livestock Exchange Building was constructed. These advancements marked the real beginning of the great success for St. Joseph's livestock and meatpacking industries. In July 1900 a special issue of the *St. Joseph Journal of Commerce* reported:

The packinghouse district has been like the Phoenix of old, only it has not sprung from its ashes, but from the wreck it had fallen in 1896 and 1897. In the space of three years, it has grown from insignificance as a packing center to be one of the great factors in this line. . . In 1897 came the great awakening of St. Joseph. In August of that year, Swift and Company, the great packers. . . broke ground for their new plant, followed almost immediately by Nelson Morris & Co. almost eight months after these two great packers opened their plants for business, in March 1899, the Hammond Packing Company commenced work on their new plant. . . When in April 1900 they opened for business, people realized that St. Joseph was on a sound foundation having the three most modern packing houses in the world. The capacity of these mammoth plants are 5,000 cattle, 15,000 hogs, 10,000 sheep and 10,000 poultry daily. . . The packing business in dollars in St. Joseph amounts to about one-half of the business transacted here yearly.

The St. Joseph stockyards was the fifth largest market in the United States, behind Chicago; Kansas City, Kansas; South Omaha; and New York. It held this position through the first half of the 20th century. In 1899 the yards had a capacity to house 25,000 hogs, 18,000 cattle, and 8,000 sheep daily. It was St. Joseph's largest industry, employing more than 4,500 area residents. In this era, South St. Joseph quickly developed into its own self-contained city. In 1911, there was a move by St. Joseph to expand the city limits so as to bring the stockyards and the Livestock Exchange within the boundaries. The Stockyards Company opposed this

annexation, arguing that the market and the packing centers were built without the financial assistance of St. Joseph and thus the area should not be burdened with the requirements imposed by city government and responsibility for its debt. The resolution in opposition read in part: “We can confidently assert that the success of our undertaking is the principal element in the growth and prosperity of the city of St. Joseph, having brought to our market about \$500,000,000 in payment for livestock sold here and more than \$60,000,000 as wages distributed among its working men.” Despite this opposition, the City of St. Joseph went forward with the annexation.

Not surprisingly, with the large workforce employed at the yards and packing houses, there were instances of labor unrest in the area. In late 1921 the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen of North America called a strike. The *St. Joseph News-Press* reported that most of the workforce reported for work and that the places of those who did stay out of the packing houses were quickly replaced. Taking no chances, the City of St. Joseph deployed extra police to ensure that no violence occurred.

A number of terrible accidents happened in the packing houses. In August 1898, a lightning strike caused part of the Hammond Packing House to burn, resulting in the serious injury of two firemen. The same facility was struck by fire again in July 1903. The fire killed two men and injured three others. The most devastating of the accidents was the explosion at the Armour (formerly Hammond) Plant in May 1930. At 3:15 pm a huge blast from the vast ammonia tanks ripped through the smokehouse. It was said that the explosion came without warning and that the workers had no chance to escape. The final count was 19 dead; six women and 13 men. Many of the victims lived in the residential areas around the packing house district.

In 1918, the St. Joseph Stockyards had its highest total yearly receipts – 4,087,650 head of livestock were sold through the facility. In 1919, the number dropped to just over 3,000,000, and sustained at this level until 1961. Unfortunately, the gradual closing of both the Swift and Armour plants between 1965 and 1983 was a severe setback for both the stockyards and to the St. Joseph economy overall. The shuttering of the plants put huge pressure on the stockyards because their business was almost entirely slaughter animals destined for those plants. In 1995, Ed Czerwein, the St. Joseph Stockyards manager cited changes in transportation and legislation in the 1920s as the beginning of the decline for stockyards nationwide. Anti-trust legislation of the 1920s forced the packing plants out of the stockyards business. The St. Joseph Stockyards ended operations in 2021; however, meatpacking remains a large industry in the area with large concerns such as Triumph operating successfully.

3. Sources: Terry Raffensperger, “Geography Helped Make St. Joseph a Meat-Packing Town,” *St. Joseph News-Press*, Nov. 5, 1995; Armour Takes Over Hammond Plant,” *St. Joseph News-Press*, July 18, 1912; “Improvements Going On,” *St. Joseph News-Press*, April 6, 1898; “Most Workers Refuse to Quit Packing Houses,” *St. Joseph News-Press*, Dec. 5, 1921; “Struck by Lightning,” *St. Joseph Weekly Herald*, Aug. 4, 1898; “Costly Fire at Hammond Plant,” *St. Joseph News-Press*, July 6, 1903; “14 Dead, 3 Missing in Blast at Plant of Armour Company,” *St. Joseph News-Press*, May 9, 1930; “Workers Trapped as Blast Wrecks Plant,” *Farmers’ Weekly Review*, May 14, 1930; “Pitiful Scenes at Factory Gate as Word is Awaited,” *St. Joseph News-Press*, May 9, 1930; “Nineteen Lives Snuffed Out,” *St. Joseph Observer*, May 15, 1930

4. Images



Site of former packing houses



Site of former packing houses



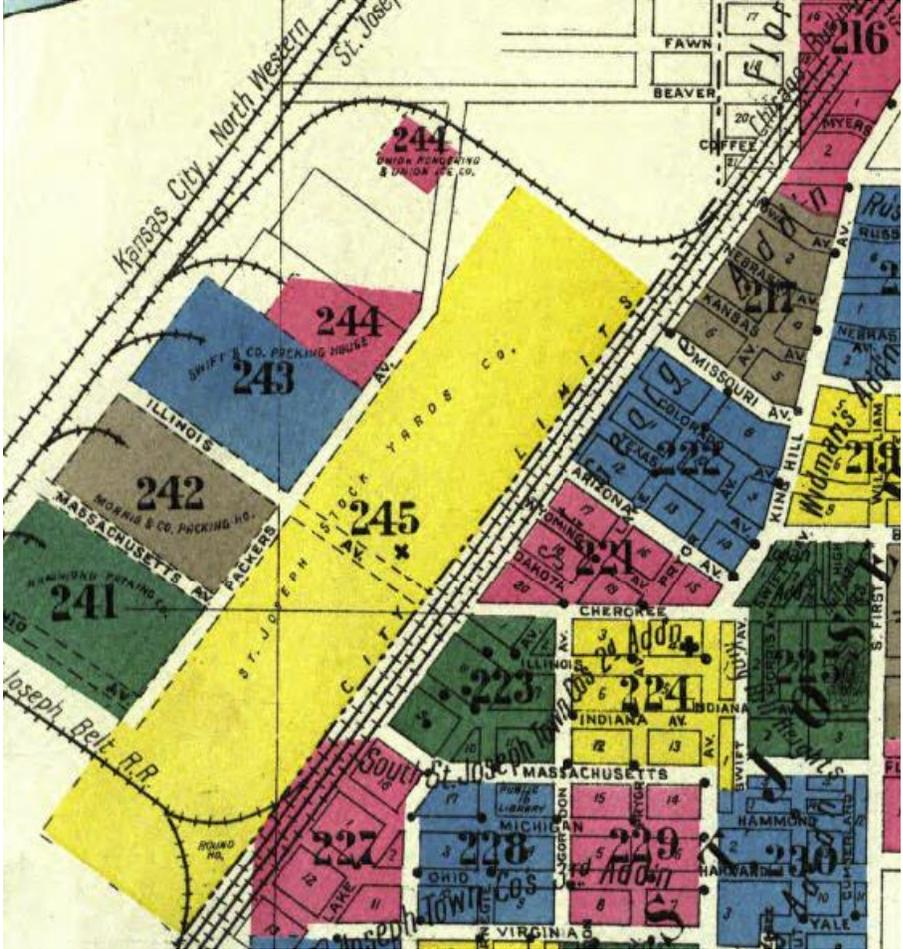
Livestock Exchange Building



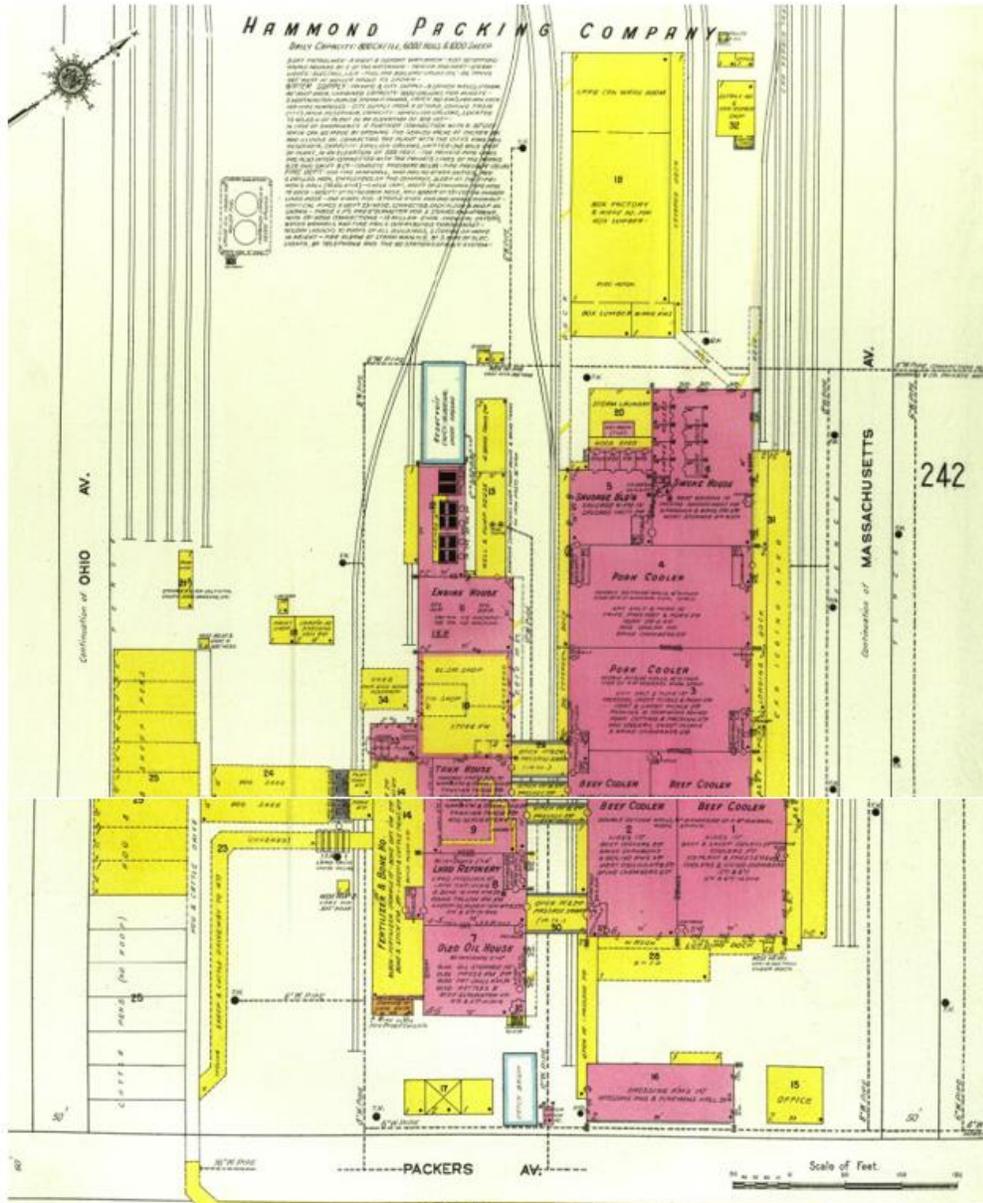
Site of former packing houses



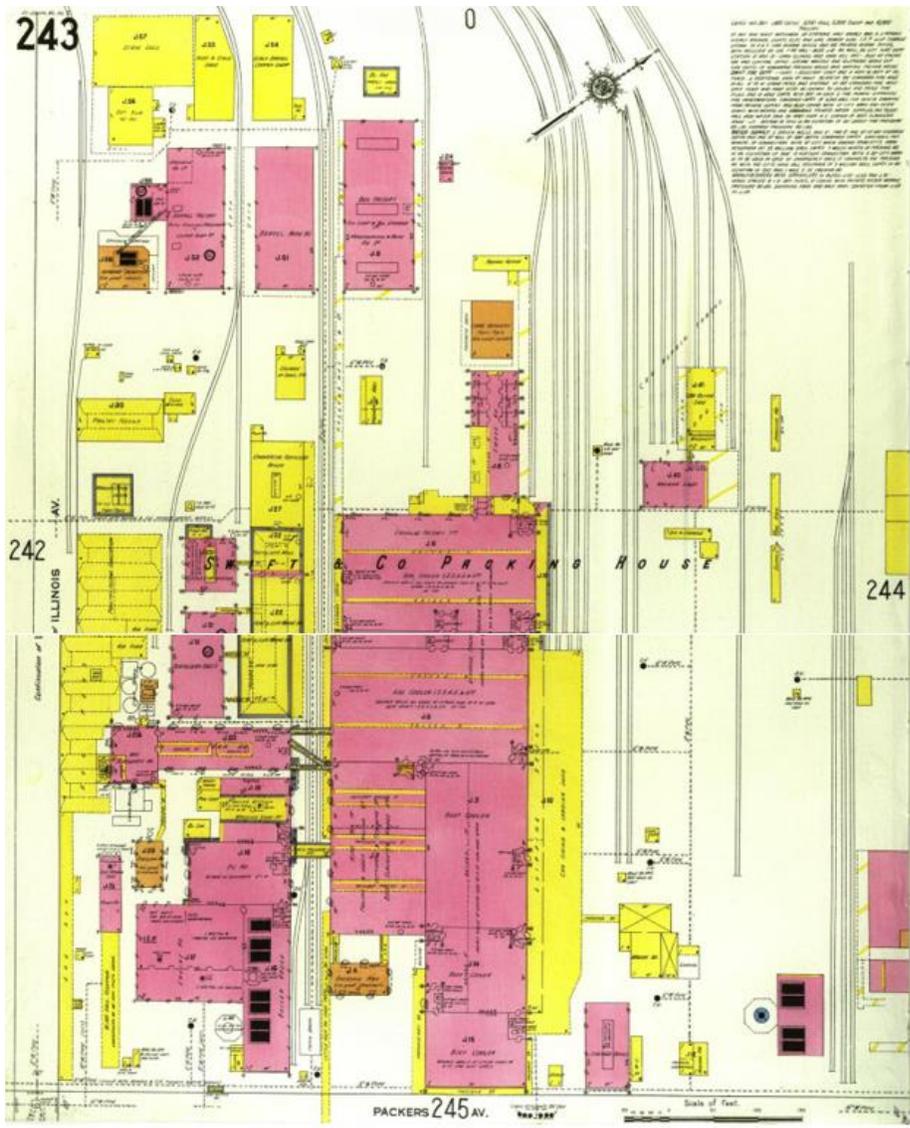
Site of former packing houses



1911 Sanborn Map



1911



1911

The Great Packing Houses and Stock Yards of St. Joseph



View of Packing House District in South St. Joseph
Showing the New Plants of Swift & Company and Nelson Morris & Company.

St. Joseph Gazette, May 1, 1898

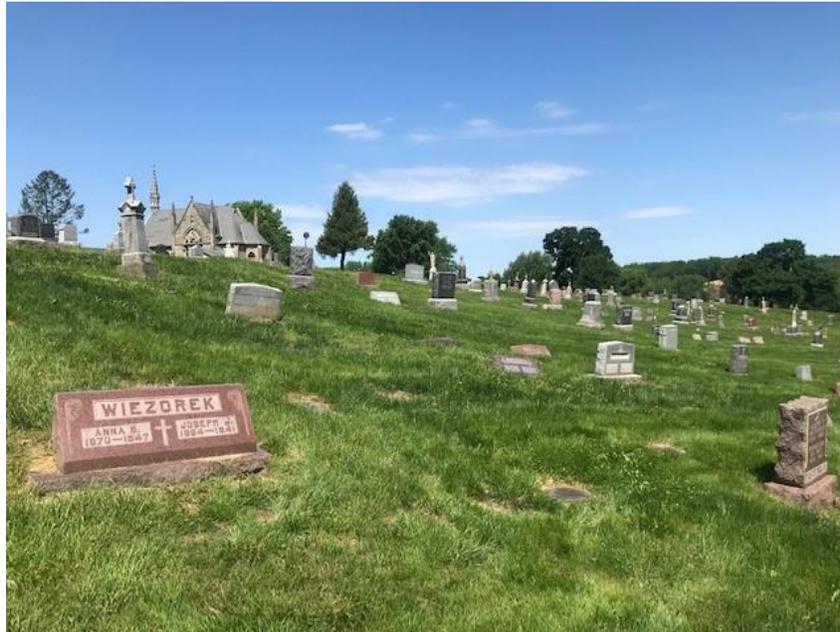
Photographic View of Tragedy at Armour & Co. Plant



OLD MORRIS PLANT TRACKS AND CONVEYOR SHED LOADING DOCK SWEET PICKLE PLANT (Above) SMOKEHOUSE (Below) SOUTH WIND SMOKEHOUSE
Photo from Staff Photographs

Image of the destruction following the 1930 explosion

Mt. Olivet Cemetery



1. Introduction: Since nearly all of the Polish community in St. Joseph was Catholic, they tended to bury their dead at Mt. Olivet, the Catholic cemetery. A walk through the well-kept grounds will take you past the family names that appear in association with other sites on this tour. John Marek, the founder of Marek’s Deli, the Goosetown families of Borkowski and Dubowski, and the packing house employee John Klekot can all be found here. Frank Wieczorek, one of the 19 victims of the 1930 explosion at the Armour Packing House is also buried here.

2. Backstory and Context: Over the course of St. Joseph’s history, the Catholic community has been served by two cemeteries: Calvary and Mt. Olivet. Only Mt. Olivet is still in existence. Beginning in the mid 1850’s, Calvary Cemetery was the leading burial ground for the Catholics of St. Joseph, including town founder Joseph Robidoux and his family. Calvary quickly began to fill up and began to fall into a state of disrepair. By 1890, complaints were being made by community members on the lack of upkeep. Once citizen wrote to the *Catholic Tribune* in the summer of 1891, “This graveyard is badly neglected. The grass and weeds in many places require cutting. . . instead of walks, there is a few uneven paths; no taste displayed in any way. . . The sexton is fully doing his duty, but one man cannot do much.”

In 1894 Bishop M.F. Burke of the St. Joseph diocese purchased land on Lover’s Lane for a new cemetery stating that “the location of Calvary has never been desirable.” The new Catholic cemetery was consecrated on May 30, 1895, with Frank Browne, an early settler of St. Joseph being the first interment. Many families began moving their loved ones from the old Calvary Cemetery to the newer, more desirable, Mt. Olivet.

The most notable, and perhaps dramatic, reinterment was that of Joseph Robidoux and family in 1908. Heavy rains first delayed progress, then the lack of headstones or records made it

necessary to excavate the entire lot. The metallic coffin that was described in accounts of Robidoux's funeral in 1868 was not located. One grave was found to be empty, while another contained two skeletons. Two days later, the *St. Joseph News Press* ran the article, "Soon Will Have Body – Grave of Joseph Robidoux is Probably Found," but heavy rains again halted progress. After exhuming everyone from Robidoux's plot and failing to locate the metal casket, exhumations were extended to neighboring plots. By the 22nd all who had been exhumed in the search for Robidoux had been moved to Mt. Olivet, but the metal casket still had not been found. No further updates were given. A marker to Joseph and the Robidoux family was erected at Mt. Olivet.

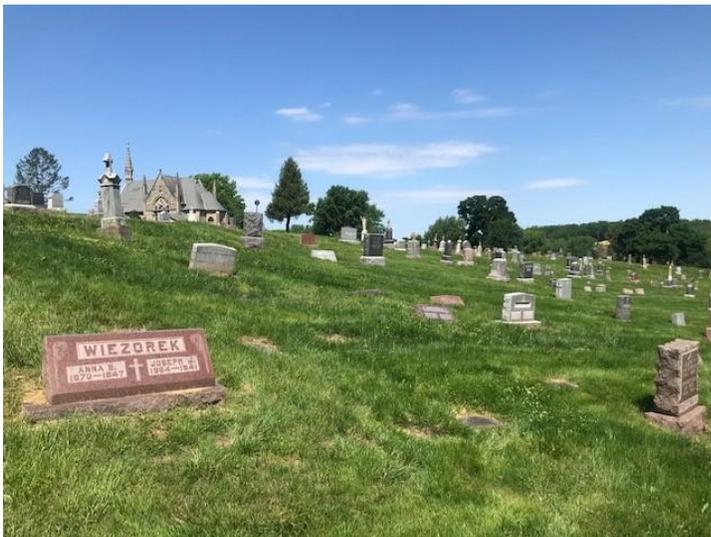
The last burial took place at Calvary Cemetery in April 1910, after which it fell into an utter state of neglect. Nearly 50 years later, Bishop John P. Cody of the Catholic diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph asked for Calvary Cemetery to be vacated fully. By 1963 the Calvary property was sold to the Steele Trucking co. and all burials uncovered during the grading work were reburied in Mt. Olivet. The land was ultimately never developed and remains an empty field.

Not suffering the same fate as Calvary, Mt. Olivet is still in active use and kept beautifully. Covering nearly 49 acres off of both the Parkway and Lover's Lane, Mt. Olivet's winding paved paths make for a wonderful afternoon walk. The gothic Horigan Memorial Chapel is particularly striking. Mt. Olivet is one of the few cemeteries in St. Joseph that has headstones with porcelain memorial portraits that became particularly popular in the 1920's and 30's.

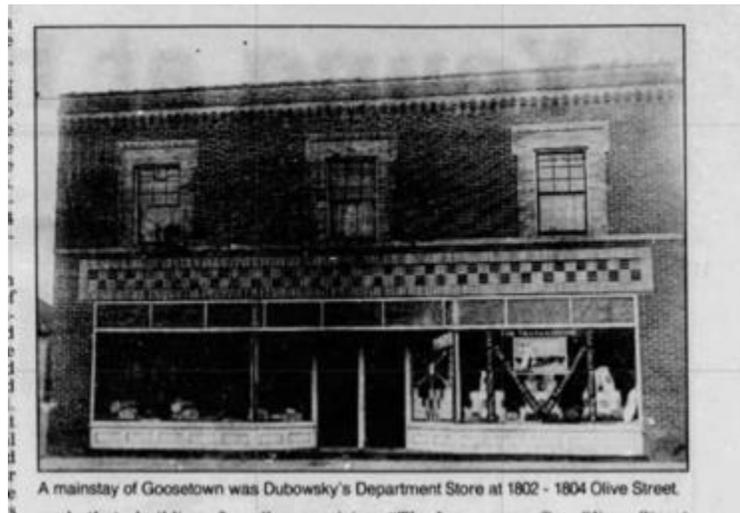
[Written by Marina Trifan, genealogy librarian, St. Joseph Public Library]

3. Sources: "Letter to the Editor," *Catholic Tribune*, June 27, 1891; "New Catholic Cemetery," *St. Joseph News Press*, May 8, 1894; "Child's Coffin Unearthed in Robidoux Plot," *St. Joseph Gazette*, Aug. 12, 1908; "Robidoux Body Not Yet Found in Family Lot," *St. Joseph Gazette*, Aug. 13, 1908; "Rain Stops Search for Founder's Body," *St. Joseph Gazette*, Aug. 15, 1908; "Bishop Asks Calvary Cemetery be Vacated as a Burial Ground," *St. Joseph News Press*, April 29, 1959; "Remains from Former Cemetery are Reburied," *St. Joseph News Press*, Sept. 6, 1963;

4. Images



Goosetown



1. Introduction: The Polish community was centered largely in the Goosetown neighborhood. For the Poles, the primary street was Warsaw Street. Most of the Polish community worked either in the packing houses of South St. Joseph or at Devil's Backbone, a substantial brickyard located behind St. Patrick's Church. Others made their livings in the garment factories in downtown. For those who worked in the Southside, transportation from the Goosetown neighborhood to work was difficult. Though there were streetcars running down Messanie Street to the packing house district, most of these workers could not afford to ride them. This prompted some of them to move further south to be closer to their jobs. They established St. Stanislaus Church. The move to the Southside marked the end of the ethnically homogenous community; once there they began to intermarry with the many other groups who lived and worked in that part of St. Joseph.

2. Backstory and Context: Goosetown, a neighborhood between Messanie and Lafayette Streets and 17th and 22nd Streets, was an enclave of Poles, Germans, and Swedes in the pre-World War I period. The name came from the large number of residents who raised geese. This neighborhood had the feel of an agricultural village. In addition to raising geese, most residents had their own gardens, smokehouses, and raised chickens. Life in Goosetown was lively and vibrant. Between 1896 and 1908 they had their own baseball team known as the Goose Town Sluggers. The area was known for being a bit unruly.

The primary street in Goosetown was Olive Street; a glance at the City Directories for the first years of the 20th century gives a wonderful idea of the density and diversity of the area. Olive Street was mixed residential and commercial, with most blocks containing a mixture of both uses. A walk down the street in 1909 would have taken you past the establishments of shoemakers, painters, blacksmiths, barbers, clothing merchants (both new and second hand), drug stores and pharmacies, fuel and feed, cigar manufacturers, and a sheet metal fabricator. And if it was food or drink you were after; Olive Street was the place to get it! Nearly every block had

a neighborhood grocery, there were several saloons, multiple meat merchants, confectioners, and even an ice cream cone manufacturer. These enterprises were owned and operated by people of varying backgrounds, many from Eastern Europe.

One of the best-known families in Goosetown was the Borkowskis. Antoine, born in 1887 in St. Joseph, one of 24 children of his Polish parents. Antoine began his career as a saloon keeper in the packing house district of the Southside. But in the 19teens he opened his own saloon in the heart of Goosetown, at 1927 Olive St.

On the 1800 block of the street were two businesses operated by the Frank Dubowskys – Sr. and Jr. At 1818 they operated a meat market and at 1802-04 a grocery and meat market and the family lived above the shop. Frank Sr. was born in Bohemia, as was his wife Verona. The couple married in 1865 and came to the United States in 1867. The 1900 census shows them living at 1802 Olive Street with seven children between the ages of 9 and 22 (there were two older children who no longer lived with the family). All of the children were born in Missouri. The family were parishioners at SS Peter and Paul Church. In November 1904, Frank Jr. died at the age of 29 of typhoid.¹

An event on February 15, 1904 illustrates a great deal about the character of Goosetown. That night William Dubowsky, Frank Sr.'s 19-year old son was arrested in the company of Harry Gray, an African American on charges of robbing Paul Szopieray Jr. of \$35 in cash and some jewelry in an Olive St. saloon. In order to get a confession, the young suspects were “put through the sweat box.” “According to the facts learned by the officers, Szopieray was found in the closet drunk, by the two men. They carried him into the wine room and laying him on the floor, went through his pockets, taking all his valuables.”

Today, Goosetown is a shadow of its former self, but if you look carefully you can find traces of what was once a vibrant and unique neighborhood. The saloon operated by Antoine Borkowski at 1927 Olive St. is still there – and you can still get a beer! If you peer behind and above the recent vinyl cladding at the storefront with living accommodation on the second floor at 1802 Olive St. where the Dubowskys worked and lived, it is possible to imagine the role it played in the life of this neighborhood.

3. Sources: Kimberly Schutte, “The Eastern European Immigrant Community of St. Joseph, Missouri, c. 1850-1950,” <https://www.stjosephmo.gov/DocumentCenter/View/14841/Eastern-European-Immigrant-Community-of-St-Joseph-MO-PDF?bidId=> “Feud of a Village,” *St. Joseph News Press*, Feb. 11, 1896, pg. 7; “A Boy’s Escapade,” *St. Joseph Herald*, Sept. 5, 1897, pg. 5; “Accused of Stealing Pups,” *St. Joseph News Press*, Oct. 16, 1899, pg. 5; “‘Rolled’ Drunken Man; Arrested,” *St. Joseph News Press*, Feb. 16, 1904, pg. 10.

¹ An examination of the St. Joseph Death Record Database for the year 1904 shows that this cause of death was very unusual.

4. Images

OLIVE STREET No. 9 in a series on St. Joseph streets. Olive is a mixture of residence and business sections, colorful and busy.

Musser School, at 24th, will soon be replaced by the new Mark Twain School.

Goose Town! The business district on Olive, extending from 17th to 22d, includes many kinds of stores. Goose Town theoretically extends from 17th to 24th, Lafayette to Messanie. In olden days there was a brick and cement goose pond where the building at extreme right now stands. Nearly every householder in the neighborhood kept geese or ducks.

Olive Street Methodist Church is on the west side of 15th.

Everett School is at 14th street. Once the building housed Junior College.

First Church of the Nazarene is at 11th and Olive.

Wyatt Park Assembly of God is at 27th street.

Many new homes have been built in recent years on the eastern part of Olive.

Early day architecture was unique. This onion-shaped dome is at 19th.

Receive 4 No. 1 Ratings at Contest

Trash Dumper Caught

EVEREST, Kan., April 10 — The

St. Joseph News Press, April 11, 1954



1802-1804 Olive



1927 Olive

Marek's Deli



1. Introduction: Every town has its iconic dishes; the food that is unique to the place and reflects its particular character. The Torpedo Sandwich from Marek's Deli is one of those dishes for St. Joseph, MO. Marek's Deli has been a staple in the Southside since Polish immigrants John and Frances Marek opened their neighborhood grocery store in 1919. It is now in a new location but remains a family business.

2. Backstory and Context: John Michael Marek immigrated from Poland in 1903 at the age of 19. After a few years in New York and Boston he moved to St. Joseph where he worked for Swift Packing Company and the Burlington Railroad until his health prompted him to open a neighborhood grocery in 1919. He and his wife Frances operated the store until John's death in 1966, becoming famous for their Polish sausage and other Polish delicacies. John and Frances are buried at Mt. Olivet.

John's son Walt and his wife Mary Alice opened their own deli in 1946 featuring homemade Polish sausage, cabbage rolls, and breads. It was Walt who developed the signature sandwich, the Torpedo ("the sandwich that sank the sub") – a version of a submarine sandwich featuring their famous sauce. In 1982, the business expanded and opened in a storefront on Virginia Street. In 2014, the location on Virginia Street suffered a catastrophic fire and there was talk that the business might close. But the family pulled together and reopened, staying in the Southside. Today it is located at 308 Illinois Avenue, in the heart of the "Junction" and it is still serving up their Torpedos (as well as many other terrific lunch options).

3. Sources: Rachel McCoy, "Marek's Torpedo," *Stories of Uncommon Character*, July 31, 2018, <https://uncommoncharacter.com/stories/mareks-torpedo/> "Mareks have a lot to Offer," *St. Joseph News Press*, March 9, 1986; "Mareks Specialize in Good Food, Service," *St. Joseph Gazette*, March 15, 1987; Greg Kozol, "3rd Generation Carries on Success of Marek's Deli," *St. Joseph News Press*, Aug. 31, 1999; Jennifer Hall, "Marek's Deli Demolished, Hoof and Horn for Sale," *St. Joseph News Press*, Dec. 3, 2014.

4. Images



ERIC KEITH/St. Joseph News-Press

Walter Marek Jr. and Elizabeth Marek stand behind the counter at their South End store, Marek's Catering & Delicatessen. The couple represents the third generation of owners for the family-operated business.

TORPEDOES AWAY!

St. Joseph News Press, Aug. 31, 1999.

