

First National Bank Marks 120 Years in Business

Bank: Continued from page 1

Mr. Brown's son, Prentiss "Moie" Brown, Jr., the bank board chairman since 1964, remembers the challenges of the 1930s.

"When the Depression hit in 1929," he said, "the bank was well managed. We did not close the doors and nobody lost anything."

A certificate from the federal government recognizing banks that stayed open during the Depression will be on display in the main office in St. Ignace Wednesday.

In the late 1940s, the bank moved next door into a new red brick building. Upstairs of the bank were offices for a dentist, doctor, and lawyer, which included Prentiss M. Brown. The telephone company moved into the old bank building, along with Dr. Lyndon Shaftoe and a grocery store.

Today's bank building was completed in 1985 on the same State Street lot, with a blockhouse appearance and bricks on the lobby floor. The building, said Mr. Brown, reflects the French and English history of the area.

Through the years, said Mr. Brown, offers have been made to purchase the bank.

"It's been the general position



Banking operations continue today on State Street on the same lots used by First National Bank of St. Ignace since it was established in 1888. Both buildings were torn down and replaced with the current structure, which was completed in 1985. (Photograph courtesy of Abrams Aerial Survey, Inc.)



Holding an 1888 book from the archives of First National Bank of St. Ignace Friday, May 2, is bank President Jim North. The leather-bound bank book, which contains daily statements of condition, is one of several items that will be on display at the bank's main office on State Street Wednesday, May 7, marking the bank's 120th anniversary. Alongside Mr. North is a photograph of Otis Johnson, the first president of the bank.



Constructed in the late 1940s, this is the second building that housed First National Bank of St. Ignace. The building was erected on the lot to the south of the bank's original building on State Street. The current bank building is on both of the early lots. (Postcard photograph by C.C. Eby of St. Ignace.)

of the board of directors of the bank to keep it local" said Mr. Brown. "Our objective is to grow, but we want to do it on a local basis, if we can do it."

Mr. North, who has been bank president for 10 years, agrees.

"They have a duty to the shareholders to always consider those offers when they come forth," he said, "but they also have a duty to look at what's best for the organization and for the community that it serves.

"To date," he said, "there's never been a proposal that made sense all the way around."

The bank has grown, said Mr. North, by establishing branch offices and automated teller machines. In 1958 an office was opened in Cedarville, in 1966 on

Mackinac Island, in 1970 in Naubinway and on St. Ignace's North State Street, in 1995 in Newberry, and in 2001 on US-2 in Moran Township near St. Ignace.

"We are always looking to expand our presence where it makes sense," said Mr. North.

First National Bank is the 12th largest employer in the county, said Mr. North, and as of May 1, the bank has 55 employees, including 41 full-time employees at seven locations and 14 officers.

The board of directors includes Mr. Brown, Vice Chairman James Brown, Second Vice Chairman Paul Brown, Secretary James North, Charles Brown, Prentiss Brown III, Paul Bush, James Chambers, R. Daniel Musser III, Jack Swope, and Frank Taylor.

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

All Coastal Communities Can Benefit From Waterfront Preservation Discussion

To the Editor:

Kudos to *The St. Ignace News* for covering the waterfront discussion currently taking place in Mackinaw City. Once again, you fulfill your mission well in helping keep the public informed on issue after issue. Thank you.

The thing is, similar conversations are being held all across Michigan. And, as is being demonstrated, these conversations have thrust varied aspects of waterfront access to center stage. As a result, great accomplishments are blooming in community after community. We should be leading this movement. Period.

In point of fact, what is being proven is that working together in a spirit of compromise and creativity must be done, not talked about, for in today's world, yesterday's excuses are costly mistakes to be redressed as we move to a brighter future.

Let me conclude by noting that one of Mackinaw's great advantages in this waterfront protection movement is our neighboring coastal communities, St. Ignace and Mackinac Island. We share a rich history and we share a watery expanse of breathtaking beauty. Together, as one, we are truly formidable. And, at days end, it is our waterfronts which define us and annually attracts millions of guests our way.

Opportunity awaits us. Thus, the conversation.

R.E. Wallin, president
Village of Mackinaw City

Michigan Politics

By
George Weeks



Protection Agency Too Protective?

For Michigan and five other Great Lakes states, there's no more important federal official on air, water, hazardous waste, and pollution control than the Chicago-based Region 5 administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

There were well-deserved kudos for the 16-year reign of Lithuanian-American Val Adamkus, who got the job after long being a highly respected EPA career officer on Great Lakes issues.

In Chicago's EPA office, Adamkus served presidents of both parties before his 1998 election as president of Lithuania.

Now come reports that the Bush administration ousted its latest regional Environmental Protection Agency administrator for being *too* protective.

Mary Gade was forced out, according to the *Chicago Tribune*, for her relentless pressure on Dow Chemical to clean up dioxin contamination downstream from its Midland plant, an issue of long standing.

The *Tribune* said: "Gade has been locked in a heated dispute with Dow about long-delayed plans to clean up dioxin-saturated soil and sediment that extends 50 miles beyond its Midland, Michigan, plant into Saginaw Bay and Lake Huron. The company dumped the highly toxic and persistent chemical into local rivers for most of the last century."

Gade told the paper she resigned after aides to EPA Administrator Stephen Johnson stripped her powers as regional administrator and told her to quit or be fired by June 1. Quintessential walking papers.

She said of her resignation: "There's no question this is about Dow. I stand behind what I did and what my staff did. I'm proud of what we did."

Michigan Environmental Council President Lana Pollack said: "It appears that once again Dow Chemical, with help of an administration that has little interest in environmental protection, has succeeded in muzzling a woman of unquestioned credentials and integrity who was doing her job enforcing our environmental laws."

If Pollack is correct, it's a sad saga for a Chicago office of an agency whose creation is a rare positive legacy for President Richard Nixon.

Taking the other side, Representative Dave Camp (R-Midland) said of Gade: "In 20 years of public life, I have never encountered a more unprofessional and invective public official." Spokesman Sage Eastman said Camp tried to resolve differences but got an "insulting" response from Gade.

(As of this writing, there was no comment from the other northern congressmen, Bart Stupak (D-

Menominee) and Pete Hoekstra (R-Holland.)

Ex-MEC Policy Director Dave Dempsey, former environmental advisor to Governor Jim Blanchard and author of books on the Great Lakes, recalled that the Dow-EPA dioxin dispute goes back to the early 1980s.

Dempsey also said hands of Michigan's state government "aren't clean" on the contamination issue.

He said: "The illegal dioxin pit facilitated by state and county government poses a potentially huge ecological risk and future liability for taxpayers. But the Granholm Administration and/or state lawmakers still have time to take appropriate steps to protect the public interest."

Environmentalist Michelle Hurd Riddick of the Lone Tree Council called Gade's ouster "a sad and sorry day for the Saginaw Bay Watershed and for government all the way around."

She also was critical of what she called intervention by Lieutenant Governor John Cherry to add "insult to injury" by intervening to have the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality make a ruling favorable to Dow.

Of political interest in this dispute is that Cherry, who as a state senator had a strong environmental record, counts on greens for support for what is likely to be a bid for the Democratic gubernatorial nomination in 2010.

Of related political interest is that Flint Mayor Don Williamson, according to the *Flint Journal*, is eying the same gubernatorial nomination as fellow Genesee Democrat Cherry. Also in the Democratic mix may be Genesee County Treasurer Dan Kildee.

The Genesee Three.

Appeals Court Northern Seat

A funny thing happened along the way to a spirited race for the Michigan 4th District Court of Appeals seat being vacated by Judge Bill Schuette, a former congressman, state senator, and state ag director who likely will run to replace term-limited Attorney General Mike Cox, a fellow Republican.

Shortly after writing for this column that Representative Kevin Elsenheimer (R-Kewadin) had filed for the race with about 10,000 nominating signatures for the sprawling 58-county district that stretches from the Upper Peninsula to south of Lansing, I got this from Republican State Chairman Saul Anuzis:

"Kevin Elsenheimer agreed to withdraw from the race for the Court of Appeals at the request of the party to give us a better shot at holding this conservative seat. He agreed to run for re-election and continue his service in the Michigan Legislature and help

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The quotation under the flag of *The St. Ignace News* on Page 1 is from the 10 triads written by Dr. Fred Newton Scott, creator and teacher of the first continuous course in journalism in the United States at the University of Michigan in 1890. The 10 triads are chiseled on the parapet of the Detroit News Building at 615 Lafayette Boulevard, Detroit. They were headed "Ideals of the Press" or "The Newspaper in a Free Society," and serve as a reminder of what a free press means to us.