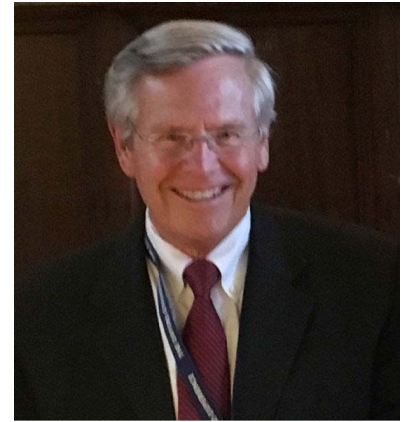


https://www.southbendtribune.com/news/opinion/viewpoint/viewpoint-a-chance-to-create-a-gateway-to-south-bend/article_d6e10a86-f22f-53f6-b702-40f744ad3432.html

Viewpoint: A chance to create a 'gateway' to South Bend

By Doug Hunt Dec 23, 2017

As the stretch of old U.S. 31 North between Angela and the Toll Road is going to be rebuilt, the opportunity to create a true “gateway” to South Bend is present. Looking to examples as close as Indianapolis with its “Cultural Trail,” we should seize the opportunity for places along the walking/biking part of the project to tell the city’s story in artistic markers that remind and inspire citizens and visitors alike.



The opportunity here is to use the compelling power of art to tell the story of where we live and by implication the story of where we are going.

Consider these chapters of our “story”:

- Our community is the historic fount of the Catholic pilgrimage that led to one of the most vibrant and beautiful religious venues and learning centers in the nation.
- We are at one of the great transition sites of the American continent: an important continental divide, more so than most others because of the historic exploration routes (“The Grand Traverse”) laid by first Americans and by major explorers; and a natural transition zone of the American continent as the eastern forests give way via the final verge of the oak-savanna forest to the first flora of the Great American Prairie.
- The St. Joseph River, which was the vital link in “The Grand Traverse” between the watersheds to the Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico. And later, the St. Joe and tributaries was one of the most heavily developed hydroelectric sites in the country, with some 50+ installations and helped power the early industrial age.
- A critical and inevitable corridor in the industrialization of the Midwest, the way to Chicago, the Prairies and the West. The New York Central’s “20th Century Limited” (the “Concorde” of its day) raced through South Bend to Chicago.

- Great influx of immigrants in the industrialization of the country ... to many parts of the Midwest of course but South Bend was the eastern anchor of an ethnic and industrial belt that culminated in the metropolis of Chicago. And what a heritage it has given us in ethnic communities! As the state senator from South Bend for 20 years I was especially proud to represent the many ethnic communities of South Bend and Mishawaka.

- Our great entrepreneurs: Of course, the Studebakers whose products from wheelbarrows for the '49ers to the Avanti are iconic; James Oliver, inventor of "the plow that broke the Plains;" Vincent Bendix, whose genius for technical innovation and for promotion of aircraft progress with his Great Transcontinental Air Race drove aircraft technology in the era.

- Two of the greatest icons of the craft of journalism have South Bend connections: Ring Lardner, though born in Niles, had his formative experience as a reporter for the South Bend News; Red Smith, a graduate of Notre Dame, is once and forever a part of our community.

- Speaking of Saint Mary's, Sister Madeleva, the iconic president of Saint Mary's for nearly 30 years, was a national figure and a poetic talent in her own right, having friendships with, among other icons of the American arts, Helen Hayes and the great American poet Wallace Stevens.

- Finally, at least in this correspondence, I must mention what I think is a truly "Founding Story" of our community, one which derived from the faith and dedication of the Sisters of the Holy Cross during the Civil War. Some 65 nuns out of 160 in the order went forth to be nurses in the Civil War. Not only were they the core of what became the Naval Nursing Corps, but they were at the fount of the American nursing movement. Just consider the faith, courage and devotion to a beautiful mission in an awful conflict. That in my view is a founding story of our entire community.

These are stories and they can be artfully rendered to teach and inspire both our visitors and our citizens. The strength of the past reaches the present and inspires our future as a community.

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