



Even though he was blind, Franz continued to work until 1903, when he retired. Three years later, Franz and Philomena celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary.

Franz died six years later, in February of 1909. He was buried in a casket that he had made 15 years before he died.



Golden Wedding Anniversary photograph on September 22, 1906 Front Row: Anne, Florence, Gertrude, Rose, Cecilia, Adelaide, Leo Mike, Genieveve, Alex (Sox), Jim. 2nd Row: Margaret, Clara, Cora, Mag, Francis Xavier Hirscher, Philomena Roth Hirscher holding baby Pauline, Alfred, Valley (Valentine), Philomena holding Baby Herbie, Aunt Rose holding Baby Phillip. 3rd Row: Frank, Uncle George, Uncle Val, Uncle Joe holding Regina, Aunt Clara, Aunt Kate Hattenbuger, Mayme, Carrie, Olly, Aunt Teresa, Uncle John, Tony, Ben. Back Row: Uncle Alexander Hattenburger, Mr. Roth (Grandma's Brother), Alois Hirscher.



“Although totally blinded by cataracts seventeen years before his demise, Mr. Hirscher had continued his delicate and artistic carving, guided only by his sense of touch, until 1903 when he finally retired.”

*The Shakopee Story*, p. 224

Francis Xavier Hirscher funeral mass was at the beautiful high altar at St. Mark's, the one he so carefully carved.



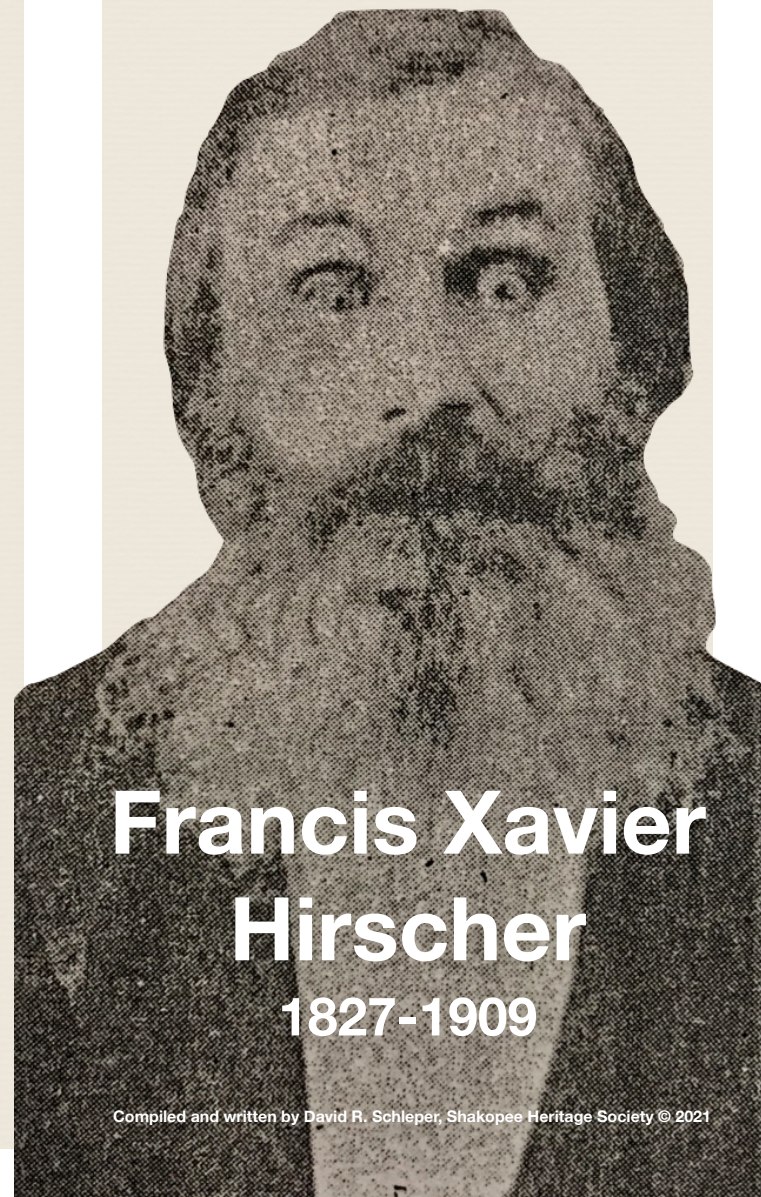
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2109 Boulder Pointe, Shakopee, MN 55379

952-693-3865

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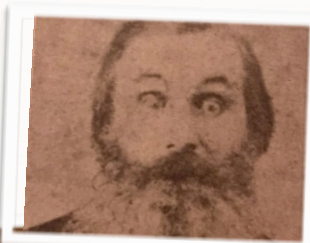


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Francis Xavier  
Hirscher  
1827-1909

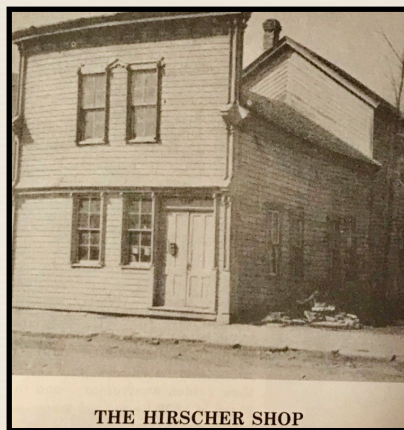




Francis Xavier Hirscher was born on May 29, 1827 in Wurtemberg, Germany. His parents were Franz Joseph Hirscher and Klara Anastasia Hartmann. By age 17, both of his parents were dead, and Francis decided to move to America.

In 1849, Francis Xavier Hirscher was working in Louisville, Kentucky and St. Louis, Missouri where he learned the fundamentals of the cabinet making trade.

In 1851, he moved to St. Paul. He did cabinet work in the employ of W. M. Stees five years. Francis (Franz) sold his lot and shanty in St. Paul for \$80 and came to Shakopee in 1856. He said that he was glad to get out of St. Paul as it was nothing but a slew hole and wouldn't amount to much, anyway!



On left is the Hirscher Shop, located on First and Fuller Street in 1882. On right is one of the altars from St. Mark's Catholic Church in Shakopee. It was carved by Francis Xavier Hirscher, who was blind, in 1888-1890.



Hirscher's arrived in Shakopee in 1856, and noted that Holmes and Fuller were busier than a proverbial cranberry merchant, disposing of lots, including \$400 of gold that Hirscher's paid for a lot near the levee. Francis built a furniture store and engaged in the furniture and undertaking business. In company with C. Peters he built the first cabinet shop here; they continued in partnership until 1863, since which date Francis had conducted the business alone.

Francis Xavier Hirscher went to Iowa and married Philomena Roth, daughter of Joannes Gottfried Roth and Elizabeth Haag on September 22, 1856 in Gutenberg, Iowa. They returned back to Shakopee, where they had several children, including Alois, Clara, Joseph, John, Valentine, Francis X. Jr., George and Mary.

The cabinet shop became recognized as a source of beautiful hand carved church furniture, especially altars and

pulpits. For thirty years Franz labored at the lathe and bench. In 1882, he built a new shop on First Avenue, just west of Fuller Street. His three sons, Alois, Joseph, and John also joined the business.

By 1887, Franz's eyesight began to dim. He had cataracts on his eyes, but he continued to work. In 1888 he started one of the most elaborate projects—a main altar and two side altars and a pulpit for his own beloved church of St. Mark's in Shakopee. Most of his carving was done by touch rather than sight. By 1890, when the altars were installed, Franz couldn't perceive the beauty except in the eyes of his mind.

The towers and spires, so carefully carved of butternut by the blind devout builder. According to Julius Coller II, "... he formed the delicate leaves and ritualistic symbols that combine to a masterpiece of art and a transcendence of faith that were to serve through the years as a backdrop for the most solemn ceremonies of his church...."