



Live Theatre Returns to Downtown Hammond

Long before the invention of motion pictures, Americans had to venture out to the opera house for a bit of entertainment and culture. In Hammond's early days the city boasted three opera playhouses.

The Hohman Opera House was the city's first, built by Caroline Hohman. It was located at the intersection of Hohman and State. The second one in town was the Towle Opera House. It was built by Marcus M. Towle the wealthy capitalist who helped found the city of Hammond. The Towle Opera House was located along Hohman Avenue near Sibley Street.

Towle Opera House was by far the most modern to date and the best equipped of any in the city. It was generally referred to as Hammond's Leading Playhouse. The Towle Opera House often showcased the best attractions available in the region. In fact they were on par with the first class theatres in Chicago.

Huehn Hall served as the third opera house venue in the city; however it often functioned as more of a dance hall than an opera house.

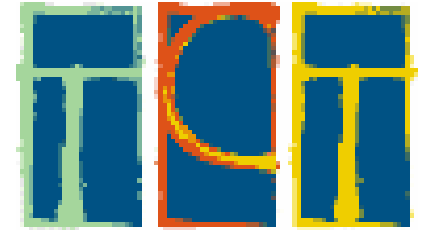
Now the Towle Opera House is reborn as the Towle Community Theatre.



The Towle Opera House entrance, located at the large "T" shaped sign.

Situated near the corner of Hohman and Sibley Street.

The new Towle Community Theatre is at the same site. It was built on a much smaller scale as its predecessor.



TOWLE COMMUNITY THEATRE

APRIL MEETING

**Guest Speaker:
Janet Moran on the
Towle Opera House
and the New Towle
Community Theatre**

**Sunday, April 18th at
2:30 p.m. in the Community
Room of the Hammond
Public Library 546 State St.
Downtown Hammond, IN**

Prior to our General Meeting, a Board of Directors Meeting is scheduled at 1:30 p.m. in the Suzanne G. Long Local History Room located on the second floor of the Hammond Public Library Main at 546 State Street Hammond, IN.

Election 2004 — Seeking Officers and Directors

Anyone interested in serving as an officer or director for the Hammond Historical Society for the 2004—2005 term please contact Curt Freeman, Marge Sohl or Peg Evans. You can reach Peg at the library — phone 931-5100 ext 305.

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Jimmy Clabby was one of the city's first sports legends. Boxing was his game and his claim to fame came in 1911 when he won the welterweight championship of the world.

Clabby was born on July 14, 1890 in Norwich, Connecticut and moved to Hammond at an early age with his family. At age 12 Jimmy learned to play baseball on the sandlots and baseball diamonds of Hammond. At one time Jimmy was even offered a professional baseball contract but he declined.

Doctor Alva Young a Hammond physician and surgeon was also a boxing promoter and enthusiast, took young Jimmy under his wings and helped him start his boxing career in 1906 at the age of 16. Doc Young would later turn over the reigns of young Clabby to Frank Mulkern a wealthy Milwaukee boxing promoter. Mulkern would soon become Jimmy's manager.

Newspaper coverage of the era was quite extensive. Covering Jimmy Clabby's travels and feats was often front page news. Stories of the boxing hero were usually a weekly event in the sports section as well.

In January 1911 it was reported that Jimmy was in the midst of a world wind tour of Australia. He was well liked by many Australian fans even though he made minced meat of most of the local boxers.

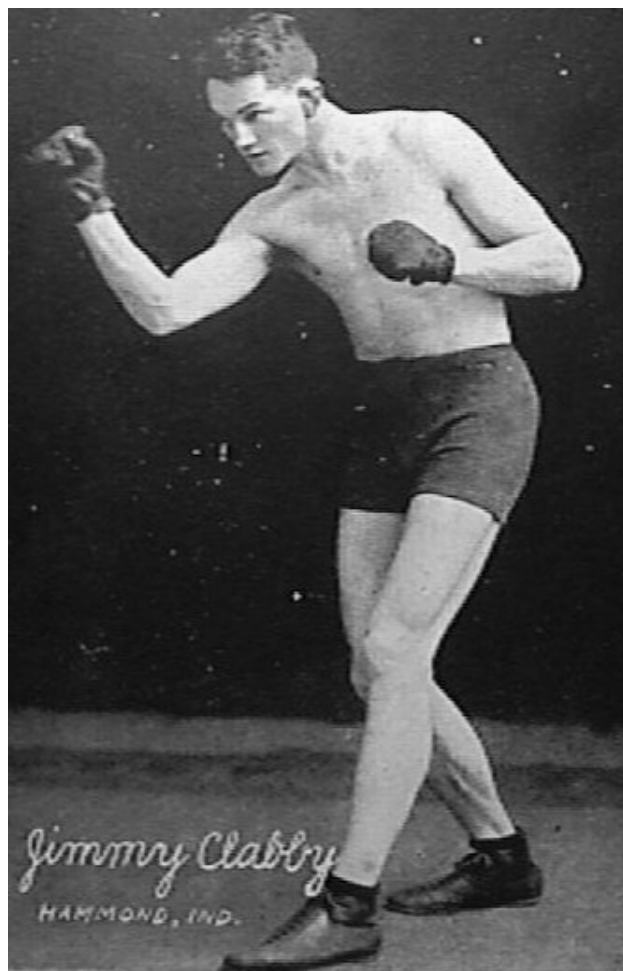
Jimmy returned back to Hammond on Sunday, April 16, 1911 after having circled the globe for the past seven months. Clabby had stated that he was glad to be back home with his friends.

Clabby made a return engagement to Australia later that year, which was his second trip to the island nation. It was in 1911 at the age of 21 he won the title World Middleweight Champion.

Jimmy Clabby left for the west coast in the fall of 1913 where he set to make California his new home. At the time most of Clabby's matches were on the west coast so it made sense for him to stay there.

As if boxing wasn't enough, cashing in on his popularity the young Hammond fighter made his acting debut starring in a film shot at Universal Studios in Hollywood California. The movie was titled "The Kidnapped Pugilist" or "The Life of Jimmy Clabby, the Middleweight Champion."

Perhaps one of the brightest moments of Jimmy Clabby's boxing career was on Monday, August 3, 1914. Clabby back in Australia once again was just 60 seconds into the first round of a fight billed for 20 rounds. Jimmy through a heavy punch to the jaw and knocked out Dave Smith of Australia. On that day in Sydney he won the Middleweight Championship of Australia. It would be a triple feat since he had already held claim to the Light Heavy and Heavyweight Championships there.



JIMMY CLABBY **Hammond's Champion Boxer**

Clabby had put close to 100 fights under his belt. They included 34 ten round fights, 15 fifteen round fights and 28 twenty round fights. He was often considered a combination boxer and fighter and had managed to knock out 40 of his opponents in the process.

Jimmy earned a great deal of money from his fights and the race horse stable he owned in Australia, and was considered modestly wealthy in his day and age and spent money like there was no tomorrow. Sadly this would lead to his down fall after his boxing career ended. He died at the young age of just 44, penniless in a Calumet City flophouse.

It was Doc Young who received the call on the morning of January 19, 1934 from one of Jimmy's room mates on his dire condition. However when Doc Young arrived at the scene it was to late, Clabby had died in the arms of the person who helped start him along in his boxing career.

Story sources: the microfilms of "THE TIMES" newspapers and the archives of the Hammond Historical Society.

EAT, DRINK and BE MERRY!

2004 Annual Dinner Reservations Form _____

Hammond Historical Society—Tuesday, May 4th Arrive @ 6 p.m. Dinner @ 6:30 p.m.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ ZIP+4 _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Attending Dinner _____ @ \$10.00 donation per person

Total amount I have enclosed is: _____

Please enclose check or money order **DO NOT SEND CASH**

Make your check or money order payable to the: **Hammond Historical Society** Mail payment to _____

Lois Sherby Stromberger — 6919 Ridgeland Avenue — Hammond, IN 46324-2234

▶▶▶ PLEASE NOTE: Deadline for receiving reservations by mail is Tuesday, April 27th, 2004

Please photocopy or clip out this form above, place in an envelope and send in with your payment as soon as possible

Join us for _____

OUR ANNUAL DINNER MEETING

Tuesday, May 4, 2004—6:30 p.m.

First Assembly of God

**5670 Sohl Avenue
Hammond, Indiana**



The month of May will be our last formal meeting time until we meet once again in the fall of the year. So why not join us for one of our most important events of the calendar year.

Time is gaining fast so hurry and make your dinner reservations as soon as possible. You won't want to be late for dinner now would you? Also remember that this is one of the Society's major fund raisers.

Plan on arriving just a little bit early at 6 p.m. for socializing — dinner will be served at 6:30 p.m. — afterwards all are invited to stay for a brief tour of the church's architecture and history.

We look forward to seeing you soon, and why not bring a friend? On Tuesday, May 4th its all about eating, drinking and being merry — and the more the merrier — as the saying goes!



THE HAMMOND HISTORICAL SOCIETY
564 STATE STREET HAMMOND, IN 46320-1532

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS:

April 18, 2004—2:30 p.m. Guest Speaker:
Janet Moran— Towle Opera House & Towle Theatre

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

DATED MATERIAL

Postmaster Please Deliver by April 17, 2004

Over the years a great deal has changed with the cityscape of Hammond. Here is an early look back in time at the Downtown Hammond area of the city.

Looking north down Ann Avenue from Russell Street we can see the many new residences of the young emerging city of Hammond, Indiana. This picture dates back to the 1910's era.

This turn of the century photograph shows us many single family and two flat apartments with several under construction. Some of the homes still remain today.

The growing town of Hammond would expand rapidly from the early settlement area of the G. H. Hammond Packing Plant.

Homes, businesses and factories would quickly over take the farm and pasture lands which comprised the locale that surrounded the Packing Plant and helped to put the city on the map.

Vintage View: Ann Avenue & Russell Street Downtown Hammond at the turn of the century

