



FLASHBACK

HAMMOND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NOVEMBER 2002

Cemetery Tour Planning Set To Get Underway

With time slipping by ever so fast it seems, our Board Members would like to get the ball rolling so we can plan for the upcoming Cemetery Tour to take place in 2003.

Please get in touch with us if you would like to take part in next year's tour. Many volunteers will be necessary to make it a very memorable and successful event as they have been in the past.

Please Check Your Mailing Label

We have received several calls and inquires from members about their subscription expiration dates.

Rest assured that we will not delete any members from our mailing list at this time.

Clerical errors may have occurred with some of the information from our master membership list, when we went to update files to get our FLASHBACK newsletter back in the mail once again.

If there are any errors in the address label located on the back of this newsletter please let us know so we can get them corrected as soon as possible.

Thank you for your cooperation in this very important matter.

The Newsletter Staff

Hammond Historic Preservation Commission Needs Committee Member

With the loss of Suzanne Long the Hammond Historic Preservation Commission is now in need of a committee member to fill her vacancy.

The only requirements are that you must be a Hammond resident and have a love of architecture and preserving the past.

Meetings are held once a month. For more details please contact Brian Poland at the Hammond Planning Department. You may reach him at 853-6397.

A REMINDER

There will be no monthly meeting in December and no FLASHBACK newsletter published. Look for the next edition in January 2003.



Be sure and join us for our monthly meeting at

**The Community Room
Hammond Public
Main Library
564 State Street**

**Sunday at 2:30 p.m.
November 17, 2002**

See the Special Supplement Insert For Details on this Month's Speaker

Who will enlighten and inform us on topical information.

Of Special Note—a board meeting will take place at 1:30 p.m. before our general meeting takes place in the Calumet Room on the second floor of the library.

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*Editor in Chief — Roy J. Speelman
Content Editor — William J. Uzdanovich*

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Famous Hammond Visitors: Gene Autry January 1949



Source information: the microfilms of "The Times" newspapers at the Hammond Public Library.

America's favorite singing cowboy made a guest appearance in the city on Monday, January 31, 1949. The second annual nationwide tour of his variety show brought him into town.

Gene Autry was accompanied by his cast of screen and radio performers along his famous horse "Champion". Autry was the featured performer in an all western musical variety show held at the Civic Center. Performances were held at 4:00 p.m. and 8:30 p.m.

Assisting Gene Autry in the show were his cast of Melody Ranch companions from the silver screen and the radio airwaves: The Melody Ranch Hands, The Cass County Boys, Pat Buttram, Johnnie Bond, Carl Cotner, Frankie Marvin, The Pinafores a female singing trio and internationally famous hillbilly comedian Rufe Davis.

In the 1940's Gene Autry was one of the most hardest working and active movie stars in Hollywood. Autry had taken time out of his heavy production schedule of four major motion pictures a year, along with his 52 week sponsored coast to coast radio show for his road shows.

Autry felt the need to bring his Hollywood Western Show to his fans and friends all over the country, because he believed that people in the cities and towns not located on the West Coast or New York City area should have the opportunity to see him and his ever popular radio show live and in person.

As a sidebar Gene Autry's famous horse "Champion" was also at the Edward C. Minas Store for a special promotional event from 2:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. that day. Fans young and old alike were allowed to pet "Champion" while the horse was on the first floor of the store. A rare treat indeed for both youngsters and grownups.

Manhattan Shirt Company Shutters Hammond Facility February 1949

In a move that surprised both employees and city officials the Manhattan Shirt Company, with corporate offices located in Patterson, New Jersey announced on February 4, 1949 that it would close its Hammond manufacturing facility.

The plant which was located at 730 Hoffman Street employed about 350, most of those women. The company produced and distributed brand named shirts, pajamas, sportswear, neckties and handkerchiefs.

Manhattan Shirt Company purchased the former Hirsch Shirt Company just five years earlier in 1944. The Hirsch Shirt Company was one of Hammond's first industries.

Over the year from 1948 to 1949 many major improvements were made at the Hammond plant. New sewing and cutting machines were installed along with the modernization of the buildings electrical system.

An effort to consolidate the company's operations was the reason given for closing the Hammond facility. The Hammond plant also had difficulty competing in the area labor market, as they were unable to match the other higher paying industries in the region.

It was reported that the company still wanted to use the factory building as a Midwest distribution center until a new location could be established, preferably in Chicago, Illinois. Company officials were having difficulties in obtaining a suitable location for the much needed distribution facility.

Source information for this article: the microfilms of "The Times" newspapers at the Hammond Public Library.

Parking Meters

A Financial Windfall For City

May 1949

In an effort to relieve an ever growing and troublesome parking dilemma in the city's downtown district, the city instituted a parking meter program. It was through this plan city officials and downtown businessmen hoped that it would help to elevate the frustration for shoppers finding a space to park and shop. The financial windfall for the city coffers was an afterthought.

If you can remember, parking in Downtown Hammond's hey-days was at a premium to say the least. How many frustrated shoppers recall double parking in the street or circling the block for an eternity it seemed, hoping just a single car would vacate a prized parking space. Just think how much money the city could have collected if they put parking meters at all of the grade crossings in Downtown Hammond!

During the late spring of 1949 all of the meter posts were installed, with many of the meter heads in place as well. The very first parking meters in Hammond were set to begin operation on Monday, May 16, 1949. at 6:00 a.m. A two week trial period was allowed as police issued only warning tickets to allow motorists time to get adjusted to the new meters.

Parking fines and tickets were set to begin on May 30, 1949. The fine a whopping \$1.00! We wonder just who was that person was to have the dubious honor of receiving that very first ticket for a parking meter violation. They could have saved a bundle if they would have raided their piggy bank for some pennies and nickels.

The city installed five hundred two headed meters and ninety four single head meters on various commercial thoroughfares and city owned parking lots in the heart of the downtown business district.

Estimates on the amount of revenue to be collected from the new parking meters, varied from a low of \$50,000 to a high of \$100,000 annually. All of those pennies and nickels sure did add up quickly and had many city fathers salivating at the thought of all of that additional income flowing into to the city treasury.

To the surprise of city officials the newly installed parking meters turned out to be a very lucrative business for the city in the long run. During the first four days of operation the city collected \$1,350 in revenue and issued some 200 parking tickets.

Money collected from the parking meter fines was deposited directly into the city's general revenue fund, while the money from the parking meter collections went into a Meter Fund to be used for street repairs.

Source information for this article: the microfilms of "The Times" newspapers at the Hammond Public Library.

DATELINE 1949

After a period of just ten weeks of operation the parking meters raked in a staggering amount of \$13,676 of additional revenue for the city. This time frame was from May 16, 1949 when the parking meters were first put into operation until July 31, 1949. That was a tremendous amount of pennies and nickels to count, since that was all the meters accepted back then. Pocket change for both you and me but not for the city.

Operating costs and the installation of the meters themselves was pegged at \$7,458 and was paid off in a matter of no time. That meant the remainder of the money collected, was basically profit for the city aside from the routine maintenance and repair of the parking meters.

Double headed parking meters were used whenever possible to cut costs and limit sidewalk clutter. Two parking spaces shared a double metered pole with certain stipulations for the parking patrons. The rear bumper of the front vehicle and the front bumper of the rear vehicle must be even with the parking meter. Single head meters were used on the street where needed and in city maintained parking lots.

A six to eight foot space was given for entering and exiting a designated on street parking space. The Board of Public Works deemed that all metered parking spaces be marked with white and yellow lines. Those boxed in areas would help to illustrate to each driver, his or her designated parking stall.

The cost for parking at a metered parking space was one cent for each twelve minutes or five cents for one hour. However there were limitations on how long you could park your car at a metered parking space. Meter posts were color coded to help alleviate any confusion. A red post allowed for only 12 minutes of parking time. Silver colored posts permitted only 1 hour of paid parking time. While a black post gave you the maximum of 2 hours paid parking time.



The Orpheum Theatre

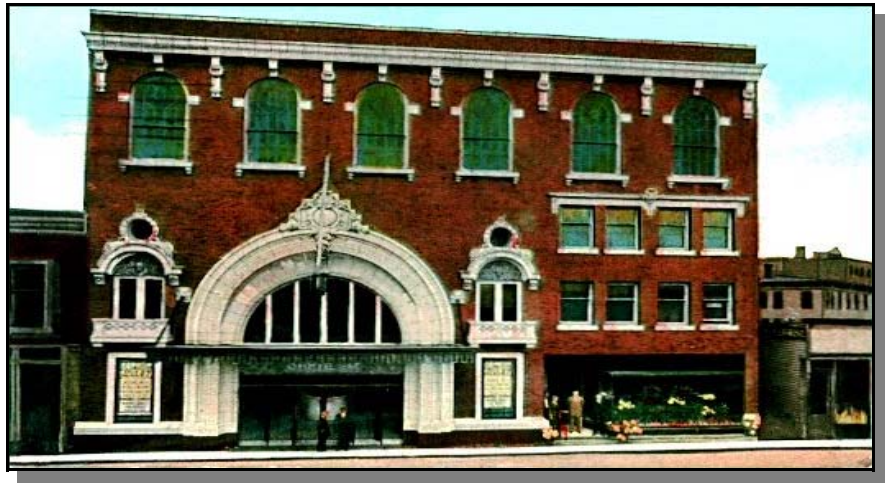
As seen here in 1913

One of Hammond's first grand old movie palaces opened in 1912. It was constructed long before the larger and palatial State, Parthenon and Paramount theatres.

Built during a mini building boom in the beginning of the 1910's, the building was billed as one of the more elegant structures of the Calumet Region. No expense was spared in its design and construction.

Designed by the Hammond architectural firm of Bump and Berry, the theatre incorporated many features and designs new to the city then. The steel and masonry construction assured the utmost in safety for its patrons. Extensive use of terra cotta in the design of the structure helped to make it visually appealing as well.

The Orpheum Theatre was the first large commercial building to be built on east State Street since the completion of the second addition to the Edward C. Minas store, located just a few doors down.



Cost of the new building was around \$60,000 which was a large sum of money back then. The Vaudeville era theatre had seating for 1,000 and was four stories tall, making it one of the tallest structures on the block.

In addition to housing a theatre, the building also had a small store front. The stage of the theatre was large enough for the production of the best vaudeville acts available.

The Orpheum Theatre was home to a Wurlitzer-Hope-Jones Organ, also known as "The \$10,000 pipe organ with the human voice" which helped bring life to the silent pictures of the era.

Sadly the theatre's lifespan was just a short forty some years, as it was later demolished to make way for more lucrative and unattractive commercial establishments.



HAMMOND HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

Hammond Historical Society FLASHBACK November 2002 A Letter from the President to the Society

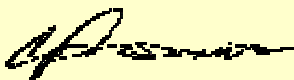
Dear Fellow Society Members,

During our October meeting the Board Members of the Hammond Historical Society resolved that the Fall Tour of Oak Hill Cemetery would resume and become a key focal point of presenting the city's past to the community of today. The endeavor will succeed or fail not on individual efforts alone, rather the results will hinge on the ability of the Society to foster interest and active participation in the history of Hammond.

The first Annual Tour of Oak Hill Cemetery (October 1998) was made possible by the vision and tremendous effort of Suzanne Long. Writing the script, surveying the cemetery for the necessary logistics, and pressing into service an impressive number of volunteers was how Suzanne was able to accomplish what was by all accounts an overwhelming success. The two following Autumns found effort translate into victory as more and more people in the community had their knowledge of Hammond and its citizens increase while at the same time having their curiosity piqued. Then in the Fall of 2001 Suzanne Long became ill and the project halted. We optimistically anticipated just a one year hiatus, however, Suzanne passed away in September leaving behind a place that will never be filled again. Just as in many of the lives chronicled in the Historical Cemetery Tour, we learned again the greatness of a city, a community, and a people is reflected in the succession of the greatness of its individuals.

The Hammond Historical Society has as its motto; "Preserving the Past for the Future." The Cemetery Tour had, for three years, been our biggest community event. Therefore, in honor of Suzanne's vision and example, plans for the 2003 Tour are getting underway this Fall. I would encourage anyone with interest in helping this program succeed, whether by personally volunteering or providing information on individuals buried at Oak Hill, to contact the Society.

Thank you very much.



Sincerely,
Curtis Freeman President,
Hammond Historical Society

PLEASE NOTE THE UPDATED INFORMATION FOR NOVEMBER'S GUEST SPEAKER BELOW

Leave your coats at home, the Hammond Historical Society is going south for our November Meeting. **Hammond Historical Society member Richard Lytle** will be presenting work of the Historical Society of Natchitoches, Louisiana. Richard will share how garnering enthusiasm in local history has brought success to historians in one part of the country and how that example can be of assistance to us as we work to engage the community with our region's own unique heritage.

SAME PLACE SAME TIME!

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