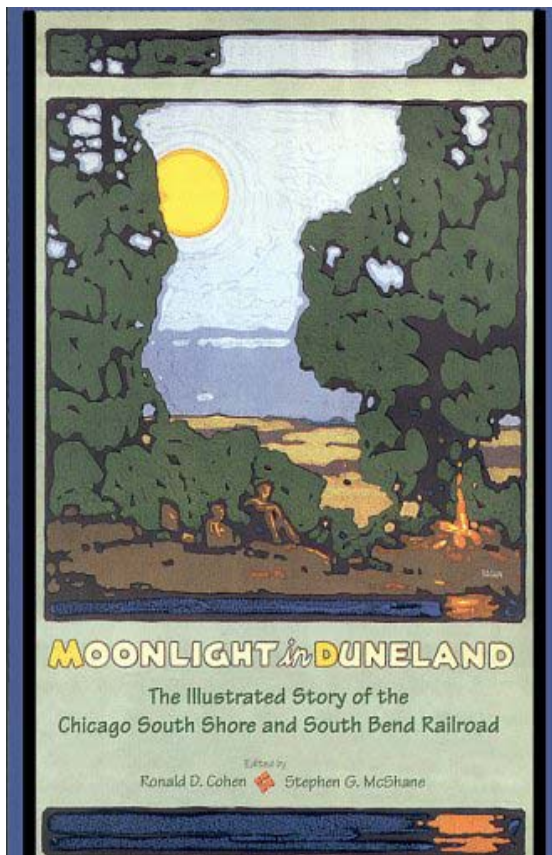




Introducing Steve McShane

Steven G. McShane will be the featured speaker at the November 16, 2003 meeting of the Hammond Historical Society. He will speak on the South Shore Posters of the 1920s. Mr. McShane is the Archivist of the Calumet Regional Archives, located at Indiana University Northwest in Gary. One of his many publications is Moonlight in Duneland: The Illustrated Story of the Chicago South Shore and South Bend Railroad which he co-edited with Ronald D. Cohen.

Come relax and enjoy this interesting and colorful look back at history.



NEWS BRIEFS

There is not much on the news front to report for this month. Other than the same old news from last month. So rather than ramble on once again in this newsletter we thought that we would just save it for the next newsletter.

In the next issue of the FLASHBACK we should have a complete report from our Treasurer on the Cemetery Tour that took place in October. All of the expenses will have been tabulated and calculated.

With the next issue of the FLASHBACK newsletter in January of 2004 we hope to bring to you news and happenings that the society is planning or will be performing in the up coming new year. Watch your future newsletters for additional information and news stories.

REMINDER: Please be sure to fill out and mail in your nominations for the next Hammond Achievement Award to take place later in 2004. Nomination forms were included along with a letter highlighting the criteria and past winners in last month's edition of the FLASHBACK.



Above is a modern day poster re-creation

NOVEMBER MEETING SCHEDULE
Guest Speaker: Steve McShane
Topic: South Shore Posters of the 1920's
 Sunday, November 16th at 2:30 p.m. in the Community Room of the Hammond Public Library 546 State Street.

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.

Editor in Chief — Roy J. Speelman
Layout Editor — William J. Uzdanovich

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The Making of a Modern Holiday Movie Classic

As we start to get ready for the upcoming holiday season, we thought that it would be an appropriate time to do a story marking the twentieth anniversary of what is becoming a modern day holiday movie classic. The making of the film "A Christmas Story" after all the movie does take place right here in Hammond, Indiana --- err Hohman, Indiana.

Everyone by now probably knows the premise and storyline of the film. The tale of a nine year old boy and his wish to make his Christmas dreams come true. We would like to take a look back behind the scenes to see how the movie became a reality.

Director Bob Clark first became interested in creating the picture back in 1973 after reading Jean Shepherd's book titled "In God We Trust, All Others Pay Cash". Later one of the stories from the book titled, "The Red Ryder Nails the Cleveland Street Kid" was adapted to form the main theme of "A Christmas Story".

Studio executives from MGM had to literally have their arms twisted and then be body slammed to the ground in order to give the movie the green light. In other words it wasn't easy for director/co-writer Bob Clark who pitched the idea for more than ten years before production would begin.

In order to find a city that resembled the Indiana town of the 1940's where the film is set, director Bob Clark sent his location scouts to twenty different cities before finally settling on Cleveland as the main stage for the film. Jean Shepherd had entertained the idea of filming the movie on location right here in downtown Hammond, however the cost to recreate the downtown to look like the 1940's proved to be too costly. Production of the movie began on January 14, 1983.

While in Cleveland the crew stumbled upon the Higbee's department store, a family owned store that was built in the 1920's, which included a large neon sign on the roof and many of the original art deco trim, fixtures and a huge corner window display similar to the Goldblatt's store here in Hammond.

Filming inside of the store took only four days. Store management allowed for the merchandise displays to be rearranged and building of a massive Santa's Mountain set right in the middle of the main floor. The huge thirty foot peak took twelve workmen three weeks to build and was complete with a Santa perch at the top. Santa's Mountain was a mass of wood, cotton batting, paper and silver sparkles.

For the setting of the movie's Christmas parade scene, film makers took advantage of the large public square across from the store. The square was decked out with six thousand feet of emerald green garland, 75,000 watts of twinkling lights and various other holiday decorations.

In the parade scene more than 850 extras were needed. Quite a task for the movie's Wardrobe Department which had to find or make the necessary costumes for the era. A large number of floats were built and six marching bands all assembled for the parade sequence which was shot during two brutally cold nights. Many of the Cleveland citizens who gathered to watch in the evening were long gone before the filming was completed in the wee morning hours.

Many Cleveland residents donated the use of antique vehicles to help bring realism to the production. However one main ingredient was lacking and that was snow. The time of the filming had turned out to be one of the least snowiest on record. Unusual for Cleveland standards since it sits right in the heart of the lake Snow Belt.

To overcome this dilemma, special effects supervisors spent numerous days trying to locate snow and assess the cost to transport it by the truckload from as far away as Northern Michigan and Buffalo, New York. To solve the problem they settled on using three different kinds of artificial snow—potato flakes along with a wind machine were used to resemble flying snow—giant bales of shredded vinyl were used to dress the set—and fire-fighting foam was used to resemble snow on the ground.

When the movie finished filming, studio executives didn't even want to release it. After agreeing to release the film, they pulled it from theaters after only three weeks of play, they were quick to chalk it off as a year end loss. But "A Christmas Story" now over time has become even more popular than anyone could have ever imagined. So popular that since 1998 the TNT cable network runs the movie every Christmas Eve for 24 hours straight.

A new following has also spawned a collection of "A Christmas Story" toys, and holiday decorations available for the first time this year. Items include action figures, bobble head dolls, lunch boxes, Christmas lights and ornaments along with two sizes of the infamous "Leg Lamp".

How ironic that the story about Jean Shepherd's childhood growing up on Cleveland Street in Hammond was filmed in Cleveland!



A new Special Anniversary Edition DVD of the movie is now available

Source info for this article via the internet Graphics on this page courtesy of flicklives.com

For more in depth information on the movie "A Christmas Story" and Jean Shepherd please visit the website: www.flicklives.com



America's Last Interurban Railroad

ALL ABOARD!

History of the South Shore Railroad dates back over one hundred years to its early inception back in 1901 as the Chicago & Indiana Air Line Railway. The railroad was incorporated on December 2 of that year and in 1903 with street car service starting between East Chicago and Indiana Harbor with a 3.4 mile route.

In 1904 the name was changed to the Chicago, Lake Shore & South Bend Railway. Ambitious plans were made for a railroad that would run from Chicago, Illinois to South Bend, Indiana. It was to be part of an enormous network of street car and electric railway companies stretching all the way from Chicago to New York.

On June 8, 1907 a special train was run from South Bend to Hudson Lake and from there on other rail lines all the way to Chicago in order to show South Bend officials and the press the progress made on the railway.

June 30, 1908 saw the first train depart from Michigan City to South Bend at 10:30 a.m. and arrive at 1:35 p.m. Difficulties on the initial trip made for the lengthy travel time, the return trip back took only 1 hour and 15 minutes. On July 1, 1908 revenue service from South Bend and Michigan City begins at 6:00 a.m. trains run every 2 hours. Later in the year on September 8, 1908 regular train service between South Bend and Hammond was under way with 10 trains daily each way.

By the end of 1908 the Chicago, Lake Shore and South Bend Railway extended nearly 70 miles across Northwest Indiana from Hammond to South Bend as passengers enjoyed frequent, fast and comfortable service on the line was widely known as being one of the best in the nation.

In 1909 trains were operated to Pullman, Illinois where passengers could change trains and continue their journey to Chicago. Soon afterwards an agreement was worked out that allowed the CLS&SBRR cars to be hooked up to a steam locomotive at Kensington and then complete the trip into Chicago.

The 1920's brings numerous changes to the railroad. In June of 1925 utility magnet Samuel Insull purchased the railroad at a public auction and renamed it The Chicago South Shore and South Bend Railroad. Insull began an immediate plan of modernization by purchasing new cars, adding new stations and changing the railroad's electrical system from AC to the current 1500 volt DC system. This was a very important upgrade because trains could now operate over the tracks of the Illinois Central at Kensington and go directly into downtown Chicago.

Samuel Insull vigorously and successfully sought freight business along this route to help increase much needed revenue. Insull also instituted a well known marketing campaign to help increase ridership to the Indiana Dunes and the lakes of North Central Indiana, resulting in the South Shore Posters of the 1920's. Ridership did increase, but the Great Depression set in and took its toll on the railroad. On September 30, 1933 the South Shore Railroad was forced into bankruptcy. As the country eased out of the Depression and the economy picked up steam so did the South Shore. By 1938 the railroad was once again profitable.

When the country entered World War II the South Shore Railroad enjoyed the best years in its history. Annual ridership topped out at six million passengers, a record that has yet to be broken to this day. Trains were in operation around the clock to help move men, women and materials to the factories in Northern Indiana.

The Post War Years brought about changes for the worse as a sprawl of suburban growth sent ridership on a downwards spiral. As many railroad passengers became private automobile passengers losses for the railroad continued to mount. Now profits from the freight services helped to stem the losses of the shrinking passenger service. As the losses continued, service was cut back and fares were increased creating a vicious cycle.

In 1976 the railroad burdened with mounting debts, deteriorating and outdated equipment—the very same improvements of railcars, stations and electrical system upgrades that Samuel Insull made some fifty years earlier—the South Shore Railroad asked the Interstate Commerce Commission for a total discontinuance of its passenger service.

The Interstate Commerce Commission delayed approving the canceling of the passenger service to allow the state of Indiana to devise a solution to the problem of the South Shore passenger service. In 1977 the Indiana General Assembly created the Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District (NICTD) to rescue the ailing South Shore, creating the modern and viable passenger railroad that we now have today.

During the troubled times of the South Shore when the railroad was on the verge of collapse the line adopted the slogan from a children's story book as "The Little Train That Could" as the South Shore overcame many hardships. That logo was placed on the sorely antiquated company's railcars as a symbol of hope. And it must have worked because the South Shore Railroad remains today as the nation's very last interurban railroad system out of a fleet of nearly 10,000 lines.

Source information via the internet — SouthShore.Railfan.net & nictd.com



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November 16, 2003—2:30 p.m. Meeting Guest Speaker—
Steve McShane—Topic: South Shore Posters of the 1920's

December 2003—No Meeting or Program Scheduled—
No Publication Next Meeting January 18, 2004—2:30 p.m.

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Vintage View Industrial High School

Or as we more commonly refer to it today, is a early photo of Hammond High School taken sometime just after its initial construction around 1916. A later addition was added to the structure in 1922.

The building was designed by noted Hammond architect J. T. Hutton in the neo-classical style. Mr. Hutton built many public and institutional buildings throughout the city and neighboring towns.



Note the rather crude Calumet Avenue in the foreground. In this time frame the street lacks an adequate pavement surface.

When this picture was taken the school faced east towards Maywood Park across the street. In the 1930's the city built a new municipal hall directly across the street.

In 1967 the school was partially burned. It was later rebuilt and additions were completed in 1973.

As the school building is nearing the century mark in age, it may soon face the wrecking ball as a new modern school is in the planning stages in the near future.