



FLASHBACK



THE HAMMOND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

OCTOBER 2003

UPDATE ON THE HOHMAN AVENUE RAILROAD TOWER



As we first reported in the October 2001 edition of the FLASHBACK about the possible move of the old Hohman Avenue railroad switching tower . . . well all that we can say is that if you've been holding your breath for the past two years you've probably turned ten different shades of blue by now.

Soon it looks like you maybe able to breathe a little bit easier. This long awaited project may be bearing some fruit in the near future.

The scope of this undertaking was complex from the very start. A variety of overlapping and unknown circumstances lead to a long drawn out process.

It was unclear as to who exactly owned the railroad tower and who owned the property upon which the tower was to be relocated to. All of those issues have now been cleared up and it looks as though the old Hohman Avenue railroad tower can finally make its move.

Plans are now underway to design a new foundation base so the tower can be moved and placed on top of it.

The tower was built over 100 years ago, its base is made of solid reinforced concrete and was built to withstand the impact of a freight train.

This construction makes the move all the more difficult since the upper half of the tower will most likely be sawed off to help expedite the move.

The old tower will find a new home at the People's Park located at the northeast corner of Michigan Street and Sohl Avenue. It will be placed near the old Railroad swing bridge which spans the Grand Calumet River there.

Logistics of the move are also in the process of being finalized. This will be a tricky move since the tower has to cross over several sets of train tracks to get to its new location.

SPECIAL NOTICE:

No General Meeting
For This Month

Board of Directors
Meeting Scheduled

Please note there will be no general meeting for the month of October. However there will be a Board of Directors meeting to be held at its usual time of 1:30 p.m. on Sunday, October 19th, 2003 in the Suzanne G. Long Local History Room located on the second floor of the Hammond Public Library Main at 546 State Street. All board members are encouraged to attend.

Next General Meeting to be held in November

The next scheduled general meeting for all members of the Hammond Historical Society will take place on the usual third Sunday of the month in November.

**Sunday at 2:30 p.m.
November 16th, 2003**

At the Community Room
Hammond Public Library Main
Scheduled Guest Speaker
Steve Mc Shane
Topic — South Shore Posters
of the 1920's

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

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Oak Hill Cemetery Tour Returns in 2003 As a Memorial to the Late Suzanne G. Long

After an absence of two years the Hammond Historical Society and the Hammond Public Library were proud to once again sponsor the annual Oak Hill Cemetery Tour.

The first tours were held from 1997 to 2000 and grew in popularity over the years. The tours were put on hold for several years while the Historical Society and the Library regrouped after the passing of the tours founder Suzanne G. Long.

As a tribute to Suzanne Long the Hammond Historical Society and the Hammond Public Library worked hard to reinstate and name the tour in her honor.

This year marked the fifth time for the tour which was held on Sunday, October 5th, 2003 from 1 to 4 p.m.

The weatherman did his part to help make the tour a huge success this year. Although we're pretty sure Suzanne did her part to keep the sky clear and help stoke up the fires of Old Sol. Temperatures although they were quite crisp especially in the shade were fairly comfortable considering the season. The clear blue autumn skies were a welcome sight to many as crowds gathered at the starting hour.

Photo recap from the top left to right Manning the Membership and Ticket Booth are Tom Long, Ruth Swanson and Larry Knoerzer, Entrance to the cemetery, Richard Lytle as "Mister Jacob Rimbach", Curt Freeman as "Mister Conroy", Marjorie Sohl, as Marjorie Sohl, Ware Wimberly III as "Mr. Warren A. Reeder Jr.", Faith Freeman daughter of Curt Freeman oversees a table of goodies, Gravestone of Emily J. Reich.

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One Hundred Four Years Ago

A Story By
Ami Crawford

*Hammond Historical
Society Member*

With my teeth tightly clenched, I shove my foot down on the clutch and thrust the stick shift into the fifth gear. My fingers ache from grasping the wheel too tightly, as I accelerate down the road. I'm so stressed out, so tense, wrapped too damn tight to say the least. Tuning onto the street, I feel wind tunnels spinning in my head, interrupting the current that connects the neurotransmitters in my brain. My thoughts are so scattered, I can hardly stay focused on driving. I must be operating on auto-pilot, because in spite of this pandemonium, I know where I need to go.

As soon as the green wrought iron gate comes into view, my heart rate drops, my shoulders relax into an "at ease" position, and with a sigh of relief, I sink a bit lower into my seat. Downshifting into second gear, I slowly pass through the towering gate, savoring the sensation of a calming surge of warm water that rushes through me; loosening the knots that my nerves have been tied into. This sudden and immense relief brings a welcome sense of peace to my restless mind. Even my movements become slower, as the tension subsides. I wipe the sweat from the palms of my hands, before parking and stepping out of my car.

This is where I feel most at home. Everything looks just as it did the last time I was here. The lawn is well manicured; not in a fussy way, like golf course grass . . . but rather in an earthy natural way. The sky is a milky-grey as we make the transition between end of winter and beginning of spring. Lush velvety moss, the color of evergreens, thrives lavishly; thanks to the shade the trees provide from spring through fall. The bark on the trees is a deep rich black. The branches are still bare, exposing all the intricate details of the thin black fingers intertwining in a race to reach for the sun.



All living things have an inborn drive to search out the elements they require for their survival. Trees dispatch their roots to gather and consume essential nutrients for their growth. I have seen their roots from some trees begin to grow above the ground, trailing through the grass, as if in search of vitamins and minerals that they cannot find below earth; the roots hungrily boring through the rich soil, eagerly consuming the bountiful supply of nutrients that await underground.

There is uniqueness to the shape and structure of these trees. Comparing them to the trees on the other side of the gate, I clearly see the distinction. Each tree has a personality of its own; almost human-like. They whisper ever-so-softly, in a language I don't fully understand. Yet, I know they are here to soothe me and to provide tranquility to all.

Soon new buds will burst forth from the arms and fingers of the trees, producing a canopy of green foliage to shade the earth. All the plant life will come alive again, for yet another season . . . until nature signals the time to die, and once again, repeats life's inevitable cycle.

There is very little change that goes on here, other than the seasons. On occasion, I might see a subtle change in the landscape – different flowers, fresh dirt, and spindly lime-green baby grass popping through the soil. There may be one or two other visitors here and I notice they come empty-handed. They always bring a gift as an expression of their undying love. Never, has another visitor spoken to me when I pass by en route to my destination. They will vaguely look up, with out letting their eyes meet mine . . . then quickly turn away and begin busying themselves, tidying up the area around them. It's not that they're rude. I guess they are just too deep in thought to exchange friendly greetings . . . but I understand. I continue up the incline, respectfully pretending that I never even saw them.

People never raise their voices at each other in this paradise. No one argues. There are no fights. People are treated with the utmost respect and each others worth and virtues are acknowledged and appreciated. We are careful not to step on anyone's toes. The true depth of our love is felt here. It disturbs me knowing this does not always hold true on the other side of the gate.

At the top of the incline, I see the beige sandstone bench and I know I am almost there. I never leave without acknowledging my little friend up on the hill. As I have done many times before, I read the words:

*"That is why the angels sang
on that Christmas morning."*

*Born: May twentieth eighteen
hundred eighty-five.*

*Died: December twenty-fifth
eighteen hundred ninety-five.*

*In memory of our
Darling Daisy F. Conroy.*

I wonder about Little Daisy. She was only ten when she came to reside in this land of the dearly departed. I wonder what she looked like, what color was her hair? Did she sing and jump rope? Was she a happy little girl, who suddenly became ill just before the holiday? Or, was it an accident that occurred after she opened her presents from under Christmas tree that morning? Whatever the case maybe, I am certain that December twenty-fifth was never the same again for those she left behind on this particular Christmas Day; One hundred four years ago.

Sadness begins to overwhelm me, and I must remind myself of the adage . . . To everything there is a season. And a time for every purpose under heaven. A time to be born, a time to die. A time to laugh, a time to weep. Time . . . We don't ever know how much time we have left with each other, at any given moment, before that natural cycle of life and death goes on.

I say good-bye for now to Little Daisy. I know, someday I'll meet her . . . when Christmas Day comes for me, then I too, will provide nourishment to the statuesque trees that contribute so much tranquility to those who visit and reside in the City of the Silent.



THE HAMMOND HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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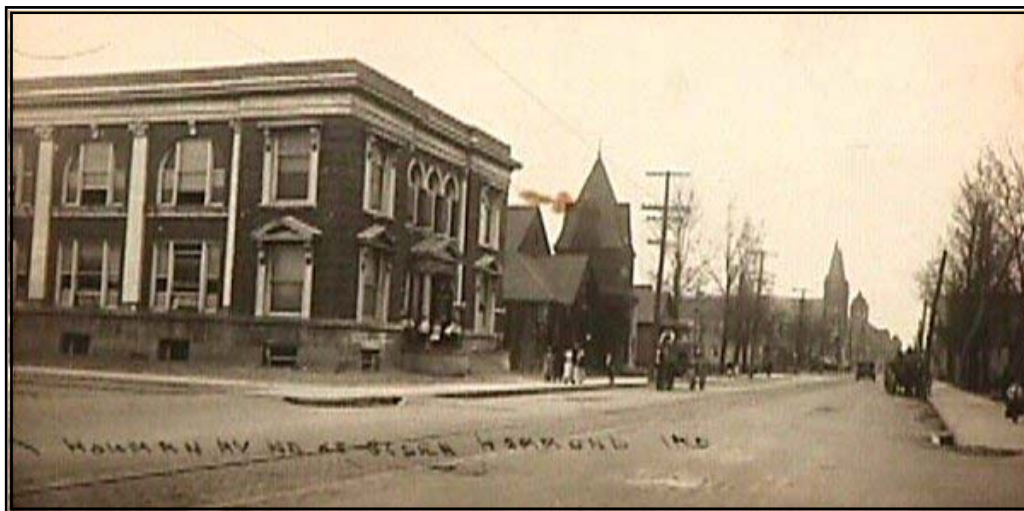
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Vintage View

Hohman and Ogden Streets

We bet that you will have a hard time recognizing the scene in this photograph to the right. A lot has changed since this picture was taken sometime after the turn of the 20th century. See if you can recall some of the buildings shown here yesteryear and today.

Looking north along Hohman Avenue the cross street in the foreground is Ogden Street. A few landmarks in the background still remain today. Notably the Saint Joseph Church to the right.



Sadly the stately architectural gem in the foreground is now long gone. The building first started out as the Lincoln-Jefferson University. The school only lasted a few brief years before fading away. Most people will probably remember the building as the Knights of Pythias before its demolition to make room for a parking lot of all things.

As more and more motor vehicles made their way to the streets of Hammond the need for additional parking areas was great. This had a huge impact on the face of Hohman Avenue and Downtown Hammond. As the city lost many old buildings and landmarks. Many were simply leveled to make room for parking lots and garages.