



2004 Oak Hill Cemetery Tour a Success

This year's sixth annual Oak Hill Cemetery tour proved to be a big hit once again this year. It was quite a remarkable day with Mother Nature at her best behavior.

The weather couldn't have been any better unless you wanted some of the summer heat that we missed out on. After a cool start to the day the temperature warmed to the low 70's by the mid afternoon with the help of the bright mid day sun.

A special thanks goes out once again to all of the members and all of the many volunteers who lent a helping hand in this years event.

Now that our tour is in the history books for another season, let's take a much deserved break. However we don't want you to get to complacence for to long, because we will have to start to plan for the seventh annual tour which will take place in less then a year from now.



The final portion of this year's cemetery tour wrapped up with Scott Sears as he enlightened tour guests about the Huehn Family's history next to the Huehn Family grave marker. Scott is a member of the Hammond Historical Society and related to the Huehn Family. Others portrayed were Florence Cleveland by Pat Magerski & Joseph Drackert by Ken Stromberger.



Curt Freeman was the first of four who portrayed figures from Hammond's historical past at the start of this year's tour. Curt told the story of Mr. John Wilhelm and his family. For those of you who don't know, without Mr. John Wilhelm there would probably be no Hammond Historical Society. Wilhelm was instrumental in founding the society back in 1960.

NEWS BRIEFS

501C (3) Status

Work is still progressing on the forming of the not for profit tax exempt status for the society. Before this can happen minor changes in the bylaws of the society must be instituted before the paperwork can be turned in to the IRS for approval. This is currently in process and should be completed by the end of the year.

Even though we are currently considered a non for profit entity, the tax code does not permit individuals or businesses who wish to donate items or money to deduct their donations from their income taxes. The new 501C (3) status will allow these charitable contributions to be tax deductible.

Hammond Achievement Award Dinner

Honored guest and recipient for this year's award, Mark Kruczek received a standing ovation after his key note speech accepting the award on behalf of the Hammond Historical Society and the Hammond Rotary Club.

The event was held at the Dynasty Banquet Hall on Friday, October 8th. A large group of well wishers that included Mayor Thomas McDermott Jr. and members of the Rotary Club and the Hammond Historical Society were also on hand.

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The Hammond Historical Society — President, Ken Stromberger — First Vice President, Margaret Evans — Second Vice President, Richard Lytle — Secretary, Marjorie Sohl — Treasurer, Larry Knoerzer 2004-2005

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REGION HAUNTINGS

I AIN'T AFRAID OF NO GHOST

When the people of the Calumet Region talk about horror stories they are most likely to mention the traffic halting construction of the Borman Expressway or perhaps recall an attempt to get a taxing matter resolved smoothly at the County Building down in Crown Point. Yet the character of a community can often be reflected through its ghost stories --in the more literal sense.

This is why during month of October, which began with a cemetery tour and will end with Halloween, we thought it would be a fitting time to look at some of our local ghoulish tales. Though forlorn lovers, haunted schools, and psychotic pastors are in and of themselves decidedly not amusing, they are frequent fodder for many a yarn or tall tail--so please take no offense.

Gary / Black Oak - Along the Interstate Highway stood an old house that was once a speak easy (bar saloon) and a home for ladies of the night often you could hear a car pull in and hear men entering the basement where they would shoot the owner of the saloon and upstairs you could see a woman dressed in red and often was crying and would reach out to touch you and a man would leave the basement and walk upstairs and often pushed witnesses down & they could hear the screams of women and children loosing their lives this house has been since destroyed but to this day you can see the woman in the red crying and reaching for you.

Griffith - Reeder Road - If you walk for about an hour and a half down the path at the end of Reeder road, you will find a small white chapel church from the early 1900's. You will hear the screams of the congregation that was killed by a mentally insane pastor years ago. When you walk back late at night you will pass railroad tracks, if you stop and look to your right you will see a man in all black walking very slowly toward you down the middle track.

Hammond - On the road as you enter into Gary especially on Halloween, you can see the ghost of a girl who died after running into the Calumet River with her wedding gown on, the weight held her down and drowned her. Her ghost can now be seen. Also the ghost of a girl who got in an accident can be seen there.

Hammond - Bishop Noll Institute - 2nd Floor - On the second floor, in the A-wing you can hear footsteps and people talking with the whole floor being empty. In the lab rooms, chairs would fall off desks without being pushed. There are 3 know deaths in the school. One in front of the Library where a single stop will be constantly cold. Second, a freshman drowned in the pool, which is no longer used and closed off, which you can hear laughter from. And third, in the second floor A-wing, a janitor hung himself.



Hammond - Bishop Noll Institute - Auditorium - They have said of a story about the auditorium of Bishop Noll Institute. About a young girl who was auditioning for the lead part in a play, but because she did not receive the part she started crying. She walked on the lights above the stage and hung herself. Ever since then, anyone who auditions and gets the lead part or a part with many lines has gotten hurt. They lose their voice, develop illnesses, break their leg, almost choke, fall off the stage, and much more during the course of the play.

Hammond - Near Columbia School - There was a man who was having a very hard time. He and his wife had recently got a divorce, and he could no longer see his children. He was also fired from his job. The man was really, really upset and decided his life was no longer worth living. He committed suicide by hanging himself. Years later the residents living there can hear the man talking to them during the night, he also interferes with their lives by, for example, throwing tools all over the garage. Also, on the anniversary of his death a quick white light can be seen from his window to remind the neighborhood of the tragic event.

Hammond - Old Botanical Gardens/Reaper's Realm - People say there are two women who died there and they haunt the place. You can hear people walking around upstairs if no one is there. There have also been sightings seen in the forest behind the mansion. People have seen two unknown women working in the background. This usually happens when they are setting up for Reaper's Realm.

Hammond - Gavit High School - Every morning at about midnight. There is said to be people walking around the roof and if you shut the windows the night before some of the windows will be open. If you are inside you can hear metal clinking together and muffled screams, along with orbs and figures walking.

Munster - The Bieker House - The house is very well known in Munster, Indiana. A woman dressed in white can be seen during day or night. The house is vacant [for years], and known for its huge red barn [burned down]. It is owned by the city. As at one time, the city offered the huge house and property "rent-free" & "utility-free" to anyone willing to live in the house for the purpose of preventing vandalism to the house & grounds. No offers were ever met.

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REGION HAUNTINGS

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Lake County / Crown Point - The Old Lake County Jail - An old jail located in the town square where John Dillinger made his famous soap gun escape! There are reportedly MANY hauntings there. It was used up until the 1970's as a jail until the new county government complex opened and since then you can see spirits, orbs and hear a dog barking, jail cell's slamming, people talking, etc.

Lake County / Lowell - Lake Prairie Cemetery - Mists, orbs of light, and figures of the deceased locals have been seen here. The southern half of the cemetery has the oldest grave markers, and that is where the most activity is. The cemetery is located on Calumet Avenue, 2 miles west of US Route 41.

Lowell - Indiana Bridge - There is a mansion a little bit further down the road that 3 people were apparently murdered and thrown off the bridge. Take I-65 to the Lowell exit and take a right on Clay Street. Reports of cars rocking and thick fog appears from nowhere.

Lowell - Intersection 173 Avenue and Holtz Road - When you are driving East on 173rd there are two big hills. When you top either hill you can see the intersection at Holtz Road. When you top the first hill, on occasion you will see a bunch of flashing lights and what appears to be a huge wreck. When the road continues, you lose sight of the intersection. When you can see the intersection again, it is clear and there is no sign that anything was ever there. This has been seen by many people.

Merrillville & Griffith - Reeder Road - A girl named Elizabeth Wilson drowned in a swamp after the car she was riding in went off the road into a swamp. People say that if you drive down the road at night you can see Elizabeth waiting on the side of the road waiting for a ride back to her house down the road. People who claimed to give her a ride back to her house get as far as Ross cemetery before she disappears. The same cemetery that she was buried in 1955.

Porter / Michigan City - Devil's Bridge - La Porte border - It is said that in the early 1920s the mob used this area to bury bodies that have never been found. Currently it is a known devil worshipping spot. Orbs, images, and disappearing men have been seen here. It is located off County Line Road, on the Porter County side.

Porter / Porter County - Historical Society of Porter County Old Jail Museum - has had paranormal activity recorded and when open for Halloween haunted houses many orbs and strange things have been seen and people have gone missing.

Schererville - Sherwood Lake Apartments - Many years ago when the apartments were first built, a woman was alone with her son one day near the lake feeding the ducks. The boy threw a temper tantrum as they were getting ready to leave and in an angry rage the woman pushed him into the lake. Not being able to swim, the little boy drowned. Residents say you can hear the little boy's screams for help in the night, and many have seen a little boy drowning but when they jump into save him, there is no one there.

Whiting / Robertsdale - Whihala Beach - If you go there at night, there is a small patch of woods that overlook the beach. There you can see ghostly outlines of old sail boats and people dressed in old time bathing suits swimming and playing in inner-tubes. You can also hear the faint sounds of people splashing and laughing.

I know you don't believe any of this, do you? I didn't think so. Or if you do, I'll look forward to seeing you at Reeder Road this Halloween.

Signed The Ghost Writer

Source information for this article was gathered from—
www.theshadowlands.net Any information to bolster, debunk, or specify details in this or other ghost stories from around the Region please forward to:

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Editor's Note—

There are several books available on this subject at local book stores. Or check the branch of your local public library for availability. More stories are also available online.

*For more reading check out these books:
by History & Hauntings Book Company / Whitechapel Press*

HAUNTED HOOSIER TRAILS [Published 2003]
MORE HAUNTED HOOSIER TRAILS [Published 2004]
HAUNTED INDIANA [Published 1997]
HAUNTED INDIANA 2 [Published 1999]
HAUNTED INDIANA 3 [Published 2001]
HAUNTED HEARTLAND [Published 1985]
GHOST STORIES OF INDIANA [Published 2002]
LIGHTS OUT [Published 2002]
ODDBALL INDIANA [Published 2002]
DOWN IN THE DARKNESS [Published 2003]

*For online viewing go to:
<http://www.prairieghosts.com/hauntin.html>*



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Why Leaves Change Color in the Fall Folklore and Facts:



Editor's Note: While researching the seemingly endless rolls and drawers of microfilms at the Suzanne G. Long Local History Room over the past many months. My eye was drawn to this article in the October 30, 1949 edition of the Hammond Times. Now seemed like an opportune time to share this story with you.

Native Americans held to the belief that the autumnal color change took place because the celestial hunters had slain the Great Bear. His blood dripped on the forests thus changing many of the trees to red, while other trees were colored yellow by the fat which splattered from the kettle as the hunters cooked their prized catch.

Others believed that Jack Frost, a folklore figure performs his magic by coloring the leaves and forests as the seasons changed. But as we all know modern science has figured out what ancient folklore has tried to prove.

Here is a simple and brief explanation. During the spring and summer months, leaves manufacture the food vital for the tree's growth. Tiny chlorophyll cells inside of the leaves give them their green color. During the autumn months, much cooler temperatures and less sunlight shut down this growing process this causes the leaves loose their green chlorophyll coloring.

Therefore the rich fall hues we now see in the leaves are their actual colors. Sometimes more sugar is left in the leaves then can be stored in the tree's body or trunk, this result is the richer more vibrant tones of red, orange, yellow and purple.

— **J. L. Van Camp, Extension Forester, Purdue University**

Source: Microfilms of The Times newspapers located at the Hammond Public Library, Hammond, Indiana
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