



FLASHBACK



THE HAMMOND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

OCTOBER 2005

Program Schedule For the Remaining 2005-2006 Season

November 20, 2005
Local Historian & Author
Archibald McKinlay—
Speaker
*—Meeting held in Partnership
with the Friends of the
Hammond Public Library*

December 2005
No Meeting Scheduled
—Holiday Season

January 15, 2006
“German Influences
in Hammond”
Ken Stromberger—
Speaker

February 19, 2006
“East Hammond &
Brooks House”
Ron Sims—Speaker

March 20, 2006
“Kolas Christian Book-
store of Hammond”
Roy Kolas—Speaker—
Longtime Owner

April 2006
No Meeting Scheduled
—Easter Sunday

May 2006
Annual Dinner
Date & Location TBA

Of Special Interest:
Saturday, October 29, 2005
— 9:30 a. m. to 1 p. m. *
“Beginning Your Genealogy”
presented by the Northwest
Indiana Genealogical Society
in partnership with the
Hammond Public Library
*** Pre-registration is required**
Please call (219) 931-5100

Please Note: Programs and
speakers are subject to change,
please check the latest editions of
the FLASHBACK Newsletter for
that month’s program.

Part of Hammond’s
history for 45 years
— **FOUNDED 1960** —



Dear Fellow
Officers and Directors,
Please plan on attending
a meeting of the Board of
Directors on:

WEDNESDAY,
OCTOBER 19th at 7 PM
In the Suzanne G. Long
Local History Room at the
Hammond Public Library.

Thanks, Ken Stromberger

NEWS & VIEWS

No General Meeting for the
month of October due to this
month’s Cemetery Tour that
was held at the beginning of
the month. A financial report
will be published once all of
the expenses and income
have been tabulated.

The only event for the 50th
anniversary of the old NKPRR
#624 engine in September
was a small display set up at
the Main Library by the
Hammond Historic Preserva-
tion Commission.

Editor in Chief — William J. Uzdanevich
Co-Editor — Roy J. Speelman
FLASHBACK is published monthly from
September thru May—Eight times a year
except in December, June, July & August

— FLASHBACK is a publication of
The Hammond Historical Society
564 State Street Hammond, IN 46320-1532
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Printed on Recycled Paper

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The Hammond Historical Society — President, Ken Stromberger — First Vice President, Margaret Evans —
Second Vice President, Richard Lytle — Secretary, Esther Kristof — Treasurer, Larry Knoerzer 2005-2006

AUGUST 24th, 2005 BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Hammond Historical Society was held on August 24, 2005 in the Suzanne G, Long Local History Room of the Hammond Public Library, President Ken Stromberger called the meeting to order at 7 p.m.; nine members were present. Margaret Evans read the minutes of the May 17 Annual Meeting, they were approved as read. Larry Knoerzer gave the treasurer's report, stating the expenditures since May and the checkbook balance of \$4,577.93. The report was accepted as given.

Membership Committee met on August 3. Flyer regarding cemetery tour was shown. Committee will do a membership promotion after the tour. It was MOVED, SECONDED, and CARRIED to accept the report. Discussion was held regarding election of a board member to replace Marge Sohl who passed away. It was decided to table this item to the September meeting. The Nominating Committee will meet prior to the next board meeting. This is a one-year term.

The La Porte County Historical/Genealogical group invited us to participate at their October 15, 2005 meeting. It was MOVED, SECONDED, and CARRIED that we pay the \$10 fee which entitles us to a table to sell our books at the event, which is from 9 a. m. to 3 p.m.

This year's cemetery tour will be held on October 2 from 1 - 4 p.m. Tickets will not be printed, (*except for a few that pay in advance.*) There are twenty-one names on the tour, with four presentations. Two hundred flyers will be printed and distributed at the libraries, chamber of commerce, and possibly at the visitors' center. There has been no contact from the Rotary Club regarding a Hammond Achievement Award. It was agreed that we will "wait and see" if we hear anything from them.

We have approval of the principal of Harding School to take pictures, inside and outside, of the building. She advised that there will be an Open House in spring 2006 to which alumni will be invited, and we are welcome to take pictures at that time as well. It was MOVED, SECONDED, and CARRIED that we take pictures at that time as well. It was MOVED, SECONDED, and CARRIED that we take pictures now and at the spring event. Ken will coordinate these activities.

After discussion, it was MOVED, SECONDED, and CARRIED that we use Will Uzdanovich's website for the Hammond Historical Society and pay one-half of his cost to operate that site.

President Ken states that we need consensus as to whether or not to proceed with the project of a marker for the Hohman Homestead. We further need to determine how the site will be maintained. It had been estimated that a marker and its installation would cost \$2,000. It was MOVED, SECONDED, and CARRIED to authorize the president or Brian Poland to contact American Steel Foundries regarding this project to determine how we can proceed. (The site is on ASF property on Hohman Avenue and is currently marked by a metal sign high on the outside wall of the factory.)

AUGUST 24th, 2005 NEW BUSINESS

Peg Evans reported that material from Marge Sohl is being collected. It was MOVED, SECONDED, and CARRIED that we purchase a binder for Hammond Historical Society records, incorporating Marge Sohl's records. Peg reported the schedule of programs for 2006. There was discussion of meeting during the summer, which will be considered.

Richard Lytle reported that the membership committee would like to sell HHS coffee mugs at the cemetery tour, annual meeting and wherever we have the opportunity. It was MOVED, SECONDED, and CARRIED that we authorize the purchase of fifty mugs. Richard also brought up the possibility of research to update and reissue books regarding the circus train wreck and the centennial book published in 1976, as well as Marge Sohl's journals.

Daryl Tunis brought up the possibility of having school children write essays on the history of Hammond and the Historical Society awarding prizes. He also showed an annual publication which is available at the Wisconsin Visitors Center. It was suggested and agreed that minutes of our meetings will be included in the FLASHBACK.

Meeting adjourned. Ester Kristoff, Secretary

Note minutes will be printed as recorded with the exception of some slight editing due to space constraints within the newsletter — EDITOR

A GRAND OPENING – THE STRAUBE PIANO COMPANY



A portion of the expanded factory building.

Just over one hundred years ago the city's bleak future got brighter with the opening of the brand new Straube Piano Factory on Wednesday, October 12, 1904. Back just after the turn of the twentieth century, 1901 to be exact, the city had lost its major employer and most of its economic base with the fire that had all but destroyed the George H. Hammond Packing Company.

It was an utter disaster, all kidding aside. How would this young emerging city of Hammond survive without its largest employer which provided much of the economic well being to the majority of its citizens? Shortly after the disastrous packing house fire a small group of businessmen and concerned residents formed an economic development committee. This group wanted to bring in a more diversified mix of businesses and industries to the city and help it grow and expand.

That vision was realized once the Straube Piano agreed to set up shop in the city. The company which was located in Downer's Grove, Illinois before it decided to move to Hammond, was offered four and a half acres of land and a handsome cash bonus to locate in the city. Yes, economic incentives were given to companies even back then.

The factory was a handsome structure indeed. Built of grey colored Oehlmacher brick from Michigan City, Indiana, it was designed by Hammond architect Joseph T. Hutton. The original main structure was a two story building 160 by 50 feet located just east of south Hohman Avenue. The building and equipment represented a total capital investment of \$48,000. Company President J. H. Broderick noted that plant was almost entirely paid for.

Invited guests meet at the front door of the factory which faces Manila Avenue at the foot of Havana Street. Company President James H. Broderick and Secretary E. R. Jacobson took the guests on an escorted tour of the plant from top to bottom. Many guests were surprised to see work that was already underway, as pianos were being assembled before their eyes. It took workers about five to six weeks to completely assemble a piano from scratch. The plant is expected to employ some 200 workers and have the total output of 3,000 pianos a year at full production capacity.

Upon completion of the tour an elaborate banquet was served by a Chicago catering company. Forty-two gentlemen sat down to a delicious serving of tender and juicy beef, and artistic chicken salad. Speeches were given by many company dignitaries as well and many prominent Hammond citizens.

Mayor Becker the first speaker, congratulated the company and thanked them for choosing to locate in the city of Hammond. He also said that the city was improving in the class of industries and the class of citizens through its new industries.

W. B. Conkey extended a warm welcome to his new neighbor and stated that his company had six up and down years in the city, but he was still pleased that he had chosen to locate his company here. He said that it was the best location outside of Chicago and that if he were advising his best friend to locate a factory he would tell him to come to this city.

The real speech of the evening was by A. Murray Turner. "He spoke of the loss of the packing company, comparing the loss and subsequent attempts to recover to the Chicago fire and the rebuilding of that city. When the industrial committee sought to bring relief it was Mr. Broderick who gave the first encouragement."

"Mr. Gibbs, President of the Chicago Piano and Organ Manufacturing Association made the humorous speech of the evening saying that what Hammond needed now was an ice factory and a creamery and that we could have fresh Straubes and ice cream every day."

Source information and selected quotes from the microfilms of The Times newspapers, October 1904 located at the Hammond Public Library.

FRANK S. BETZ and THE FRANK S. BETZ COMPANY

A story of personal achievement and modern industrial growth

In 1883 Mr. Betz was a workman for the Union Iron Works Company, Minneapolis. A handbag would hold his entire positions. In 1883 he had an idea that the hospital business was the right one so (*he*) secured employment with a hospital company operated for the purpose of caring for the sick and injured workmen from the lumber camps, railroads, etc. After seven years of this work returned to Chicago, and the World's Fair hit him as it did thousands of others, and in 1894 he woke up broke.

Realizing that he had to commence over again he accepted the position as a manager of a hospital at Grand Rapids, Michigan. Stayed there seven months. Cleared over \$5,300 in cash for the company, besides paying all expenses. Then the company, which was interested in other hospitals in different parts of the country, went to the wall and he was broke again.

But as he had read and heard of the prices asked by those who supplied hospitals and the medical profession, he decided that by starting in a small way, and selling his goods direct to the professionals at the right price, he could make a living; so in 1895 he started with a hammer and a few files and the enormous capital of \$25. At the end of two years he was over \$1,000 worse off than when he started, and while his customers did not find fault with his methods or instruments the surgical instrument dealers did, and they commenced to run down his goods.

This was just what was needed to open the eyes of the medical profession. Since that time he has done nothing but put up one building after another and the Betz plant back then covered over five city blocks (warehouse, saw-mill, barns, etc.) It was the result of work done by Mr. Betz and his physician friends, Sales were reported to over 85,000 physicians, surgeons, dentists, veterinarians and over 2,200 hospitals. (*An order was filled every 20 seconds.*)

Above copy quoted from a Fall 1911 Catalog #202, just one of the hundreds of numerous catalogs that the company had issued over the course of its existence from 1895 to 1937.

In 1896, Betz invented and built his first item for retail sale, a steel hot dry air device used for patient care. It was priced at \$24 while his competition sold it for \$350. It didn't take long before his sales increased exponentially. His success was built with the use of direct mail advertising, salesmen, dealers, and wholesalers. As his business flourished he quickly outgrew his Chicago location where he operated from five rented buildings.



Frank S. Betz and his wife

The Betz Company issued its first catalog in 1895 it consisted of 16 illustrated pages featuring surgical instruments and apparatuses. It was a huge success and from this date his company became a major player in the medical equipment and supply industry.

From 1900 to 1904 the Betz Company's offices were located at 41 Randolph Street in Chicago. The catalog for 1903 listed some 5000 items available for sale. A catalog showroom was located at 88-90 Wabash Avenue and the factory was at 1760 E. Ravenswood Park.

In 1904 the Betz Company acquired 12 acres of land on Hoffman Street just north of the Grand Calumet River in Hammond, Indiana. A new brick factory building and rail spur was built. The work was completed within a year and the company began operating in Hammond in 1905.

After humble beginnings in 1895 the company grew in physical size from just 120 sq. ft. that year to 15,000 sq. ft. in 1901, to 84,600 sq. ft. in 1906 to over 160,000 sq. ft. in 1911.

The company had managed to survive the Great Depression of 1929 and was eventually sold to and absorbed by the A. S. Aloe Company of St. Louis, Missouri in 1937 thus ending one of the greatest manufacturing stories and companies of Hammond.

Source information from the book Guide to Electrotherapy Instruments & History of their American Makers by Dean P. Currier

5 YEARS AGO OCTOBER 2000

Region property taxes could skyrocket as the property tax burden is shifted from larger industries to the smaller businesses and homeowners. Residents of the northern part of Lake County including Hammond will begin shoulder more of the costs associated with city government and schools. || Woodmar Country Club turns 75 years old. || Hammond's new federal courthouse cost soars to \$64.3 million a \$9.4 million increase due to the three years of construction and delays.

10 YEARS AGO OCTOBER 1995

Hohman Avenue Bridge immediately north of Downtown Hammond opens to traffic, eliminating a commuter nightmare that spanned over 10 decades. || Empress III riverboat makes its way down the St. Lawrence Seaway headed for the Hammond Marina.

15 YEARS AGO OCTOBER 1990

Paramount Theater set to come down as work crews begin to remove the 500 feet of asbestos insulation covering the pipes in the building's basement. Planned demolition of the Paramount Theater on Hohman Avenue scheduled for Monday, October 15 is put on hold. City concerned that asbestos fibers will enter into the sewer system as the wrecking company pumps out the basement of the doomed structure. The building has been closed since May 7th, 1981.

25 YEARS AGO OCTOBER 1980

Queen Anne Candy Company located at 604 Hoffman Street sold to Ludens Incorporated. The Pennsylvania based candy company is best known for its cough drops. The company will continue to operate in Hammond as a separate division; the purchase price was not disclosed. || Demolition of the former Ashland Chemical Company at 1801 – 167th Street is being closely monitored by the Hammond Air Pollution Control Department. The EPA is worried that asbestos fibers will become airborne during the demolition of the plant. Other potential dangers include drums of unknown chemicals, electrical transformers that contain PCB's and a field of tanks filled with chemical sludge. || City to get a third Walgreen Drug Store, to be located, on the northwest corner of Calumet and 173rd Street, at 7240 Calumet Avenue. The building was originally a Jewel Food Store and later a Plywood Minnesota and Piper's Carpet warehouse. Walgreen's operates stores at 5150 Hohman Avenue, Downtown and 6632 Indianapolis Boulevard in the Woodmar Shopping Center. || Several buildings on Hohman Avenue between Douglas and Clinton Streets meet the wreckers ball as they make room for the expansion of St. Margaret Hospital. The empty space will be used for hospital parking. || A planned north Hammond shopping center fades away as a couple of setbacks all but doom its construction. The mall would have included a Kmart store, supermarket and two other anchor department stores. || The Rand McNally Company talks of leaving the city.

THIS MONTH IN HISTORY -



30 YEARS AGO OCTOBER 1975

Improvement project gets underway at city hall as a new sidewalk will be laid at the front of the building, the steps were recently sandblasted and tuck pointed. The art deco doors were deemed to be too heavy and were considered a safety hazard. They will be removed and replaced with more modern light weight ones. The handsomely crafted depression era doors are considered a work of art and are now on display at the Purdue Calumet Library Building. || Region unemployment rate for September drops to 8% down from 8.4% in August. || The second phase of East Hammond's urban renewal project is set to get underway in a couple of weeks. Clearing of vacant lots and the demolition of structures is the focal point of this project. Demolition of the remaining buildings is expected to cost around \$114,310. The area contains 9 vacant lots and 104 structures. || Wednesday, October 15th marks the start of the October Minus Days Sale. Beginning at 10 a.m. in three value packed stores for six great days! || Hope you have some money left over because, Downtown Hammond Days gets underway on Thursday thru Saturday, October 23-25. Stores that participated included—Edward C. Minus Company, Goldblatt's, J. W. Millikan's, Barer's, Rothschild, Rosalee, Armin Lipsig Jeweler, Tilles, Richman Brothers, Dr. Scholl's Foot Comfort Shop, J. C. Penney Company, Jupiter Discount, L. Fish Furniture Company and Rabin's Appliance.

35 YEARS AGO OCTOBER 1970

The Eire Lackawanna Railroad switch yards south of Douglas Street in Downtown Hammond will be abandoned. The property contains just over 50 acres of valuable prime real estate, and will help put an end to a century's old problem of traffic tie ups that have plagued the city. The railroad will need to find a buyer and the city will have to come up with a development plan. The property is reportedly worth \$2.5 million. || Steel framework for the new Central Fire Station is being erected at 6220 Calumet Avenue. The building is expected to be completed and operational by spring of 1971. || Plans were approved for a \$4 million addition and renovation project for Hammond High School. A fire destroyed about 20% of the school in December 1967. The size of the school will grow by some 95,000 square feet. || Many Hammond motorists did a double take and thought they were in London. An old red London double decker bus rode around town as part of a promotion by the H. Salt Fish & Chips carry out franchise located at Indianapolis Boulevard and 173rd Street.

Source information: microfilms of The Times newspapers of October 2000, 1995, 1990, 1980, 1975 and 1970 at the Hammond Public Library.

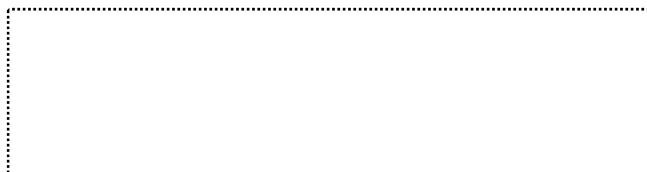


THE HAMMOND HISTORICAL SOCIETY
564 STATE STREET HAMMOND IN 46320-1532

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CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS:
OCTOBER—No General Meeting this month
Our Next Scheduled Meeting is
Sunday, November 20th at 2:30 p.m.

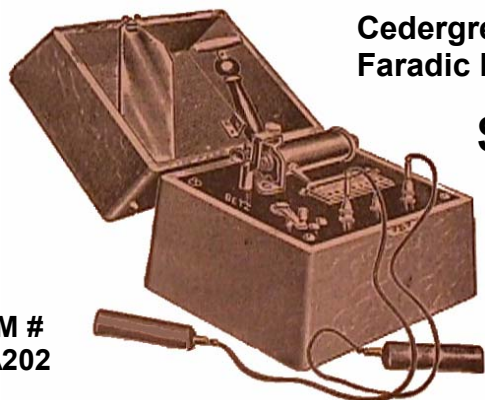
ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



DATED MATERIAL

Postmaster Please Deliver by October 18th, 2005

The Frank S. Betz Company Medical Battery Device



**Cedergren Family
Faradic Battery**

\$4.50

**ITEM #
50A202**

As Advertised in the FRANK S. BETZ COMPANY Special Purchasing Dept. Catalogue #202 FALL 1911 Over 15,000 in use. Guaranteed the equal of any Faradic battery on the market sold for \$12.00 and superior to many sold at \$20.00 Has both primary and secondary coil, with over 1000 feet of wire. Includes a pair of handles, cords, footplate and sponge electrode. Indispensable for home treatment of rheumatism, neuralgia, and a hundred and one ailments for which the Faradic current is beneficial. Outfit complete in handsome oak case beautifully polished, with 2 cells. —New set of cells 40 cents extra.

Medical battery devices were first used in Europe. The first factory opened in 1855 in England. Manufacturing in United States was first introduced just before the Civil War. In the 1850's only a few companies built them here.

Believe it or not these strange and odd looking devices were actually used and trusted by many doctors and patients. These medical devices hit their peak of popularity during the 1890's.

It was widely believed that jolting the body with what might as well be called electrical shock treatment, was thought to promote healing through the transfer of energy to the body. *After all electricity was the divine life force.*

The quality and design of the outer case was truly remarkable. Most of the better higher end boxes were built from walnut, mahogany or cherry hardwoods and later from oak. Crafted with dove tailed corners that were glued at the joints, similar to a piece of fine furniture, like the one featured in the Frank S. Betz Company catalog.

Most of the cheaper low end devices just nailed together with simple straight or mitered corners. Some were also metal covered with a leather like material. All of the cases polished and coated in a smooth or semi-gloss finish.