



FLASHBACK

HAMMOND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SEPTEMBER 2002

Welcome Back! Plan on attending this month

Now that the summer has past and things tend to wind down for most of us. Mark your calendars for this month's meeting.

September will be the first time our regular scheduled member meetings will be held in the Community Room of the newly renovated library building.

After many, many months of having our meetings held at various off site locations it will be nice to be home once again.

During the month of September the library will also celebrate the grand opening and dedication of its new building.

Events will be held all week long at the main library and at the other branch locations as well. For more information on dates, times and events please contact the Hammond Public Library.

For information on our agenda for this month see the article at the right.



Monthly Meeting In

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

**Sunday at 2:30 p.m.
September 15, 2002**

***Guest Speaker*
Joseph C. Bigott**

Assistant Professor of History
& Political Science at Purdue
University Calumet Campus

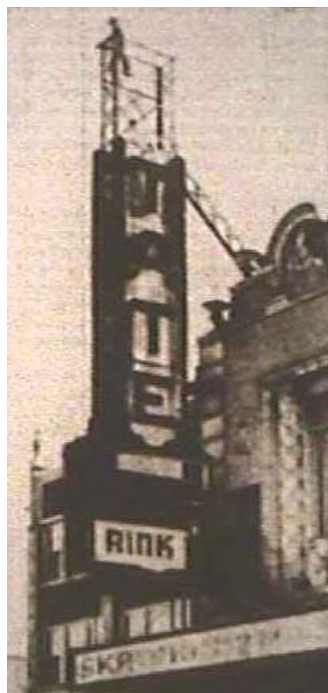
*Author of the book —
From Cottage to Bungalow:
Houses and the Working
Class in Metropolitan
Chicago, 1869-1929*

Professor Bigott will enlighten
us on his recent award winning
book. Light refreshments will
follow the presentation.

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

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State Theater Sign Off

Dateline Monday, October 6, 1947 —

It was on this day Hammond firemen tore down the old State Theater sign. An electrical short in the old sign threatened to topple it down onto pedestrians on the sidewalk below.

Rather than face the liability of the sign falling and injuring innocent passers-by the city ordered its removal at once.

How many of you know that the site of the old State Theater is now the current location of the Hammond Public Library's main facility?

The State Theater opened in 1926 and was destroyed by a bomb after just fifteen short months. The structure was demolished to make room for the new library building which opened in 1966.

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The Changing Face of State Street

State and Oakley in 1915

The passage of time, be it hours, days, months, years, decades or centuries will ultimately affect everything in the natural or manmade world. The passage of time is unavoidable unless one is in a state of suspended animation. Some things change while some things remain the same. One thing is certain time will eventually take its toll.



State Street just east of Hohman Avenue is now in the midst of its most major change in its history. A recent drive down the 400 block of State Street would leave many old timers in shock and disbelief. Gone are most of the storefronts and retail establishments that lined the south side of the block, an end result of demolition crews who began in the spring and summer of this year.

In fact most of the structures that once occupied the southern side of State Street have now vanished. A victim of neglect and abandonment their fate was inevitable. Their only fate was to meet the wrecker's ball. Even the landmark Edward C. Minas building has fallen victim. An attempt to convert it into residential and commercial lofts was proposed during the mid to early nineteen nineties failed to take root. This perhaps could have saved the building.

All of this activity is taking place to make room for the new multi-million dollar auditorium planned for the site. This new development is sure to change the look of State Street in the near future. This new building is expected to be nearly double the square footage of the former Minas store and cover most of the entire area bounded by State, Oakley and Sibley Streets.

As the city grew in its early years, commercial and retail activities expanded beyond Hohman Avenue. State Street proved to be popular as residential properties were turned into mercantile adventures. Many of the temporally looking wooden buildings were torn down to make way for more permanent looking buildings made of brick and masonry. Larger and taller structures were a sure sign of wealth and prosperity.

The photograph above helps to illustrate the many changes that has since taken place over the years. The corner building to the left was home to a drug store for many years. In all actually this was the very same building that was just recently demolished. The two upper floors of apartments and flats were removed in the last nineteen thirty's to early nineteen forty's. Giving the structure a completely new and different look.

Over the years this block of State Street was once home to many theatres and movie houses. Making it an entertainment avenue of sorts. Who could forget the Bijou Theatre and the Orpheum Theatre and one block east the palatial State Theatre. Now the site of the Hammond Public Library. Which was just under gone some major changes of its own.

At one point in time this block and its sister block to the east was once a furniture row. As numerous stores sold furniture, either as their primary business or as a mix in their line of business. Can you recall the Greenwald / L. Fish Furniture, Barrelli Furniture, Edward C. Minas Company and further down the block Seifer Furniture, Friduss Furniture, Werth Furniture, Hammond / Mandell's Furniture stores?

None of these once flourishing retail establishments remain today. All are now victims of time and changing shopping patterns and habits.

Change is it good or is it bad? We'll let you decide. As for State Street who do we have to blame? The shoppers who deserted the downtown area? The merchants who could not compete with the shopping malls? The railroads who constantly tied up the streets making it impossible to navigate the downtown area? Or was it a combination of all of the above that lead to the changes now taking place on this stretch of street?

State Street's former crowds of shoppers are now replaced by flocks of the faithful. Some things change and some things remain the same.

Edward C. Minas Company Building Demolition: A Sad Reality

A Photographic Retrospect of its Last Days

Surely one of the most dramatic changes to have taken place on the 400 block of State Street is the loss of the Edward C. Minas Company department store building.

A fixture on the block since 1894, it finally met its match as it fell to the ground with the help of the wrecker's ball during the summer months of July and August of this year.

The series of pictures to the right were taken on August 9 and 17 of 2002 as the last recognizable portions of the building remained.

Large hunks of concrete, chunks of brick walls and twisted masses of rebar were all that remained in the photos shown to the right, of this once historic landmark store.

The property on which the former retail establishment stood will soon be the home of a large auditorium to be constructed by the First Baptist Church.

Although the structure was pretty much beyond repair, workmen and city officials did manage to have its front gray terra cotta facade saved and removed in early spring, prior to its demolition. Thereby preserving a piece of the city's early history.

Now currently in storage it is hoped that one day the old Minas facade will in fact one day be placed on a brand new building to be constructed somewhere in the downtown district.



460 State Street home to the Edward C. Minas Company Building from 1894-2002

