



FLASHBACK



THE HAMMOND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SEPTEMBER 2005



IN MEMORY OF MARJORIE ANN SOHL

Society loses longtime member Funeral services were held on Tuesday, June 7th at the Immanuel United Church of Christ in Highland with burial at Oak Hill Cemetery, Hammond, Indiana. Marjorie was a life long area resident of 86 years, living in Hammond, Highland and Munster.

Marjorie Sohl served as the secretary for the Hammond Historical Society since its inception. Marjorie also served as president of the society from 1969 to 1970. Marjorie attended Lafayette School and Hammond High School, Indiana University and the University of Illinois. Upon graduating college she began a career at the Hammond Public Library that would last for decades. Even after her retirement from the library in 1988 she remained active and community minded. Marjorie did volunteer work for many Hammond area organizations up until her passing on June 2, 2005.

Marjorie was also an active participant in the annual tours of historic Oak Hill Cemetery put on by the society, she will be greatly missed. Having been part of one of the earliest families of Hammond, she has left a large amount of material to the Suzanne G. Long Local History Room for Hammond's future generations to learn about the history of their community.

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

Join us for our
monthly meeting
Sunday 2:30 p.m.
September 18, 2005

Our Annual Show and Tell

in the Community Room
Hammond Public Library
564 State Street
Downtown Hammond, IN

Members and guests are invited to bring any items of historical interest relating to Hammond to share with other members.

Popular items include pictures, postcards and other memorabilia.

This is one of our most popular and enjoyable events—hope to see you there!

Light refreshments will be served after the meeting.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Prior to our General Meeting, 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 564 State Street Hammond, IN.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT HAMMOND HISTORICAL SOCIETY For Fiscal Year — May 1, 2004 through April 30, 2005

INCOME		DISBURSEMENTS	
Dues	\$1640.00	Cemetery Walk	\$67.43
Publications	101.50	Fees	190.00
Cemetery Walk	790.50	Annual Dinner	211.45
Interest	323.43	Printing	669.64
Annual Dinner	190.00	Postage	504.61
Contribution	5.00	Publication Costs	72.00
		Supplies	112.26
		Contribution	1000.00
TOTAL	\$3050.43	TOTAL	\$2827.39
Checking Account Balance as of 5-1-2005			\$3848.64
Saving Account Balance as of 5-1-2005			\$12957.93
GRAND TOTAL as of 5-1-2005			\$16806.57

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

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STATELY WOLF LAKE PARK



Young prairie pond, Wolf Lake, Indiana circa 1908-09
American Environmental Photographs Collection,
[AEP-MIN73] Department of Special Collections,
Courtesy of the University of Chicago Library.



Older prairie pond, Wolf Lake, Indiana circa 1908-09
American Environmental Photographs Collection,
[AEP-MIN73] Department of Special Collections,
Courtesy of the University of Chicago Library.

TWENTY NINE YEARS FROM A DREAM TO REALITY

In a long and complicated struggle that stretched over 29 years, Wolf Lake Park finally became a reality in 1949. Starting back in 1920 the park's principal organizer, the Lake County Fish and Game Association had the wishes of a Wolf Lake State Park on their list of projects.

The Lake County Fish and Game Association must have known the enormous value the lake and the land would be to the region if it remained in a more natural state instead of being devoured by developers. Today the large tract of parkland is an irreplaceable natural resource to the entire metropolitan area.

During November of 1935 one of the six projects for Lake County to be approved by the WPA was a study of the Hammond Wolf Lake area to see if it could be turned into a large recreational spot. The project was at the request of the Hammond Park Board.

It was reported in February 1938 that the surface water area of Wolf Lake had decreased by as much as three fourths of its original size. The lake's surface that was once said to be around four square mile has now been reduced to just about one mile. An end result of property owners filling in the submerged land near the lake's shoreline. Proponents for the park were outraged and unable to discover any legal case that granted authority to fill in the lake.

If Wolf Lake Park were to become a reality it had better happen fast before any more of the lake is lost. The first step in creating the park would be purchasing the adjoining property and that looked like it would begin in 1938.

Things finally started to happen back in April 1938 when the first taxes that were being collected for the creation of a Wolf Lake Park would be transferred to the Lake County's Treasurer's Office. The provisions of the law to create a state park called for a two mill tax to develop the project and obtain title to the land.

The tax will prevail for seven years and collect around \$77,000 per year, according to State Senator Harvey J. Post, a member of the Wolf Lake State Park Commission appointed by Governor Townsend. The Wolf Lake Park bill passed during the 1937 legislative session.

Much of the credit for getting the park this far goes to State Senator Harvey J. Post of Hammond and State Representative Thomas Callahan of East Chicago. Both pushed the Wolf Lake Park bill through the Indiana general assembly. The park would be under the control of the Indiana Department of Conservation and lie within the city limits of Hammond. The process of restocking the lake with game fish is already underway by the department.

Two state officials arrived in Hammond on the night of April 20, 1938 to take a tour of the general area and give their findings to the state board of works. The inspection; mainly to focus on talking with the property owners in the proposed park area and set a price on acquiring the land and the title. The site chosen is between 70 and 100 acres in the area west of Sheffield and Calumet Avenues.

In July 1938 Governor Townsend was asked to speed up the process for the development of the park because monies have been available since May 1st 1938. —

STATELY WOLF LAKE PARK

— Later in November 1938 it was learned that in order to start the actual development of the park a far greater amount of money was need from the special taxation that was implemented in 1937. It was determined that an additional two years was needed to build up more funds so the state could purchase the land and property titles. A special commission created in 1937 was allowed to spend a total of \$540,000 of special tax revenues for the creation of Wolf Lake State Park.

Another bill to help the beleaguered Wolf Lake Park passed in Indianapolis on February 24, 1939 that gave the department of public works the power of eminent domain for the acquisition of land for the creation of Wolf Lake Park. Owners of the potential park land would not be allowed to collect more than double the amount of their property in the event that the state would be forced into condemnation proceedings.

During the summer of 1939 it was learned that Hammond may just lose out on Wolf Lake Park altogether since many of the land owners of the coveted property were asking exorbitant prices for their acreage. Hammond Senator Post stated "We have received absolutely no cooperation from any of the property owners. Many of (those) owners are demanding \$2,000 an acre which the state sold for a maximum of \$100 an acre."

Most of the property in question was under water at one time and is now owned by the IHB Railroad and the Shedd and Forsythe Estates. The state was also disputing the true ownership of the land along with the cost.

In January 1941 yet another road block was on the horizon that could put a stop to Wolf Lake State Park. A bill was about to be introduced that would abolish the Wolf Lake State Park Commission and transfer the funds. It was greatly opposed by now former Senator Post. Those behind this new proposed legislation stated that "Post has had four years to work on the project and he hasn't gotten anywhere."

Strong opposition to Wolf Lake Park was voiced by State Representative W. F. Danielson of Michigan City as he was leading the charge to deprive Hammond of its proposed Wolf Lake State Park. Danielson said that the site is nothing more than a glorified swamp. He also stated that the Kankakee River or Deep River near Hobart would make a much better park than Wolf Lake would.

By 1944 the Wolf Lake Park fund had accumulated to some \$476,000 and all that was needed be begin purchasing the land was a land purchasing committee since the board of works was abolished in 1941. Thus leaving no authorized agency the authority to purchase the needed land for the creation of the Wolf Lake State Park.



Hibiscus in a young coastal marsh, Wolf Lake, Indiana circa 1908-09

American Environmental Photographs Collection, [AEP-MIN73] Department of Special Collections, Courtesy of the University of Chicago Library.

While an attempt was still in the works **to take the money and run** and divert the Wolf Lake Park funds to create a new park at the Kankakee River or Deep River. Many attorneys believed that action could be stopped in court. Since the money raised was specifically earmarked for Wolf Lake State Park.

Finally in May 1949 after numerous years of ups and downs Governor Henry F. Schricker gave his "wholehearted approval" to purchase 361 acres of property at Wolf Lake finally giving Lake County and Hammond residents their long awaited park.

Total purchase price for the acreage was put at \$274,000 with the state having a five year option to purchase an additional 122 acres at the cost of \$110,000. Officials noted that they only had \$15,000 remaining in the purchase fund. Half of the original Wolf Lake Park money was taken away by the state legislation to develop the Kankakee River project in southern Lake County.

The state granted Wolf Lake Park to the city of Hammond in 1957 but never officially completed the transfer, now that is set to be completed when the Hammond Port Authority takes control of the park after the Port Authority commissioners approved a lease and operations agreement for Wolf Lake Park in April of 2005.

Today Wolf Lake Park totals 410 acres and is the largest park located within the city of Hammond.

Source information from the microfilms of The Times newspapers, Nov '35, May & Nov '38, Mar, May & Aug '39, Jan '41, Mar '44, May '49 and the internet.

Long before any of the property was purchased a number of plans were proposed when the park would be developed for recreational purposes. Here are several of those noteworthy plans that were hatched. The first one was reported in August 1941.

“The Coney Island of the West” that’s what two Indiana Commissioners who were in charge of developing a state park at Wolf Lake thought about the Hammond project. The proposed site had “five mile of shoreline including a bathing beach with water pure enough to drink.” The commissioners stated.

Another plan in April of 1945 called for a **“Wolf Lake Marine Gardens”**, with this proposal large tanks and ponds were to be filled with both fresh water and salt water fish. Ocean water would be chemically reproduced by adding low cost compounds to fresh water that would create the same chemical consistency as ocean water. The Shedd Aquarium in Chicago imported their ocean water by rail tank cars at considerable cost.

“Wolf Lake Peak” in May of 1945 was the most grand and off the wall project there was for the yet to be developed park. After it was discovered that the proposed “Marineland” for Wolf Lake Park as a main attraction was deemed cost prohibitive, E. R. Waddington, a representative of the Indiana State Conservation advisory committee called for an artificial mountain as the new main attraction for the future park.

After a meeting with the director of the Shedd Aquarium Waddington found out that the “Marineland” proposed for the new Wolf Lake Park would require millions of specially treated water on a daily basis. Treatment and filtering costs of the water would be cost prohibitive and make project unprofitable.

That was when he remembered “While hunting in Canada last fall I found a small mountain that I wished then, and since, I could transplant to the shores of Wolf Lake.” he stated. “It was only about a mile wide and possibly 300 feet high thickly covered with 25 foot spruce pines.”

“I would transplant that mountain to the shores of Wolf Lake. I would build a mountain of slag 400 feet high, interlaced with a water system for irrigation. I would cover the entire mountain with top soil and transplant that moss and trees and have ropes off paths running all over, with rustic bridges and waterfalls.”

“Wildflowers in profusion adaptable to cool damp places. I would charge 10 cents admission and make a fortune. I would start at the highest peak and run three tracks of roller coaster around the mountain at least three trips before reaching the bottom. I would so construct those tracks that they could be used for toboggan in winter. An elevator to the top and start all over again.”

WOLF LAKE STATE PARK GRAND PLANS



A scene at Wolf Lake Park as it looks today.

“A ski run from the top and out over the lake, constructed so as it could be used as a shoot-the chutes in summer.”

“There would be a fine bathing beach equipped with a national regulation high and low diving boards, so national meets could be held; yachts and canoe clubs, motor boats and surf riders, competitive races every week, skeet shooting and tennis courts and sports for all.”

“In the winter the lake would be covered with ice boats and skaters, a Mecca for pleasure seekers.”

“I would build an Alpine chalet on the side of the mountain facing the lake and serve good meals and refreshments with rooms for travelers and tourists. I would reap a harvest from the sale of souvenirs, pop, peanuts and popcorn.” — *above as stated by E. R. Waddington*

Source information from the microfilms of “The Times” newspapers, August 1941, April 1945 and May 1945.

5 YEARS AGO SEPTEMBER 2000

The price for a barrel of crude oil dropped to its lowest level in a month when it was announced that President Clinton would tap into the nation's Strategic Petroleum Reserve and release 30 million barrels of oil in an effort to curtail the continued upward spiral of oil and gasoline. The price for a barrel dropped 15% from a ten year high of \$37.20 to \$31.57 after several days of trading on the commodities markets.

10 YEARS AGO SEPTEMBER 1995

After more than a year of planning work is set to begin on sidewalk beautification in two commercial districts located in South Hammond. Improvements will feature brick pavers, flowers, trees and decorative trash receptacles to be placed between the curb and sidewalk areas in the business districts along Kennedy Avenue and Indianapolis Boulevard. || Bally's Entertainment makes a pitch to city officials to construct the new riverboat complex at the Hammond Marina. The project would feature a 40,000 sq. ft. boat with 1,175 slot machines and 65 table games, a Monte Carlo styled waterfront promenade with a 200 room hotel and shopping arcade / entertainment complex, along with a four story parking garage.

15 YEARS AGO SEPTEMBER 1990

Home once belonging to the city's first mayor, Marcus Towle is set to put on the real estate market once again. The 17 room Queen Anne and Romanesque Revival home built in 1885 last housed the Tri-City Mental Health Center, high utility and maintenance costs forced the sale. || Summer not ready to depart as area temperatures soar to highs of 95 to 98 degrees for several days. || Harrison Park Library Branch closes its doors on Tuesday, September 12. The closure came as result of cost cutting efforts by the Library Board. Located at 436 Conkey Street, it was a part of the neighborhood for 20 years. It was the only rented branch in the library system, it also had the highest utility costs and lowest circulation. The cut is expected to save between \$25,000 and \$30,000 annually. || City Council slashes the \$1 million Recycling Department budget to \$300,000 and scrapes the \$3 a month collection fee. In the mist of the shortfall, Recycling Director Barbara Hooper will implement a limited curbside pilot program and grow from there. || Mayor Thomas McDermott Sr. signs the \$39.4 million city budget for 1991 despite a veto threat. || Gasoline prices hit an all time high with news of the Persian Gulf crisis. The nationwide average price for a gallon of regular unleaded reached \$1.38 a gallon up 2.9 cents per gallon in two weeks. || City challenges 1990 census figures saying that several locations in the city were undercounted. Early census tabulations show the number of housing units in Hammond fell by 2,172 in the past 10 years, dropping from 36,061 in 1980 to 33,889 in 1990. The city lost 10.5% of its population from 93,714 in 1980 to 83,909 residents in 1990.

THIS MONTH IN HISTORY -



20 YEARS AGO SEPTEMBER 1985

A team of French searchers locate the wreckage of the Titanic steamship about 560 miles off the coast of Newfoundland under 13,120 feet of water. The ocean liner sank in 1912 on its maiden voyage from England to New York after it struck an iceberg and tore a 300 foot gash across several of its watertight compartments. A total of 1,513 people lost their lives on that fateful night of April 14-15. || Region auto dealers report a large increase in traffic and sales as the four major auto makers offer 7.5% to 7.7% interest rates on new 1984 and 1985 model cars. || Road work on 165th Street from just east of Columbia Avenue to just east of Indianapolis Boulevard is set to begin. The project will partially rebuild the street and install new storm sewers, traffic signals and street lights at a cost of \$1.39 million. || New Kennedy Avenue overpass officially opened on Friday, September 20th. The bridge spans a set of 20 tracks over the Indiana Harbor Belt Railroad just north of 161st Street. Cost of the \$8.5 million span was paid for out of the Hammond Railroad Relocation Fund passed by Congress in 1974. Construction of the four lane, 400 foot long, 30 foot high bridge began in February 1984. || Two McDonald's fast food restaurants located at 5751 Calumet Avenue and 7443 Indianapolis Boulevard closed their doors. The store that was located on Indianapolis Boulevard was the first one to be built in the state of Indiana.

25 YEARS AGO SEPTEMBER 1980

Pullman-Standard Company announces that it will temporarily cease production at its Hammond facility. A spokesperson for the company said that the move will only be temporarily and they has no plans to permanently close the plant. At the time of this announcement only 180 employees remained on the workforce out of a total of 1,200 workers during the peak time of employment. After the layoffs go into effect only a skeletal crew of office workers, security guards and maintenance workers will remain. || A proposed retail office complex was unveiled by the Hammond Redevelopment Commission. Two buildings would be built on Clinton Street east of Hohman Avenue. One building would be a professional office building with underground parking and a second smaller structure for retail shops. But as quickly as plans were announced it was scraped by the developer due to fluctuating and increasing interest rates.

Information for this article was obtained from the microfilms of The Times newspapers located at the Hammond Public Library. September 2000, 1995, 1990, 1985, 1980.



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

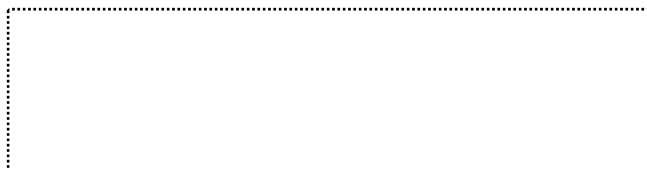
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CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS:

Annual Show and Tell
Sunday, September 18th — 2:30 p.m.

7th Annual Oak Hill Cemetery Walk
Sunday, October 2nd—1 to 4 p.m.

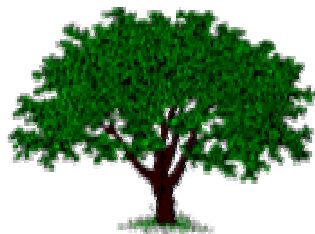
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SOCIETY NEWS *It's just around the corner!*



Sunday, October 2nd, 2005
OAK HILL CEMETERY WALK

7th Annual
Suzanne G. Long Memorial
Historical Cemetery Tour

Tickets are \$4 advance \$5 gate
Tours from 1-4 p.m.
Last tour starts at 3:45 p.m.

Sponsored by the Hammond Historical
Society and the Hammond Public Library

