



# HIGHWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MAKING HISTORY EVERYDAY

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Letter from the President

Hi Everyone,

The coronavirus has affected all of us in so many ways. Many of us know people who were afflicted with this virus, many survived and some weren't as lucky. It has taken its toll not only physically, but economically and emotionally. But as history has shown time and again, this will pass and we will recover. I think this quote from Kid Help Phone, a Canadian-based counselling service, sums up how we should approach these times: "When it's rainy look for rainbows, when it's dark look for stars."

This is a philosophy that we, the Board of Directors of the Highwood Historical Society, will follow. We are still operating as best as we can and will be planning events as soon as things calm down. The museum is still collecting memorabilia and receiving historical stories from our members. We still try to answer questions concerning our town's history.

We are here for you. But we want you to be here for us! Please stay safe during this coming holiday season and let's all hope that we are blessed with a healthy and prosperous New Year.

Tom Scopelliti

## Recent Acquisitions . . .

Mary Giarelli: Mayor Ghini political button and Highwood postcard of Laeger's corner

Helen Ori: Several laminated covers of Highwood News (1954-75)

Frank Ugolini: Harry Mussato news articles

Stella Fontana: Several newspaper articles on early Highwood

Connie Mordini: Photos of Oak Terrace School students acting out a one room schoolhouse

Louisa Marcum: Many magazine and newspaper articles publicizing Highwood, President Kennedy and Moon Landing

CJ Fiore: WW II news clippings, 1940's wedding information, small photo albums of St. James and family remembrances and other items

Sharon Browning and Kathy Browning Callen: Local Highwood restaurant menus

Tom Garrity: Several issues of Highwood News from 1960's

Kathy and Ray Wicklander: Many items related to Alice Curley Conway, articles on the Chicago North Shore and Northwestern Railroad, information on Elizabeth Curley O'Flarity (plus her 1925 wedding dress) and many Fort Sheridan items: postcards, Tower newsletter etc.

Patty Ronzani: Vintage Girl Scout items- badges, beret and bag

Andy Peterson: Photos etc of Grandfather, Jack Peterson, that showed his naval background in WW II and family information – also articles on sports, business, Fort Sheridan Tower and certificates from Highwood City Council recognizing his election. In a second donation, we received military information including many medals from Hugh L. Peterson from his service in the U. S. Marine Corp as well as additional items from Jack Peterson: Highwood Legion cap and 50 and 55 year membership certificates and 1937 8th grade graduation photo from Oak Terrace School

Frank Bock: Thirteen Star US flag and Norman Rockwell book of Boy Scouts

Larry Pasquesi: (on loan) 1934 blueprints of Family's Sears home located at 220 Everts Place, Highwood and three photos of the home, also donated several other items including photos of Highwood's celebration of the Illinois Bicentennial in 1976 (father, Carl Pasquesi was Chair of the event), Sept.6, 1964 and Sept. 28, 1975, St. James Bulletin and many memorial cards

Susan Mordini Kordek: OTS primary metal desk and chair

Nancy Pattarozzi Fiori: Several issues of the Highwood News that shared Highwood Festival Day information, and several

## Please use AmazonSmile! when shopping on Amazon during Quarantine and the Holiday Season . . .

- log onto "smile.amazon.com"
- designate Highwood Historical Society, Highwood, Illinois as your charity to receive the benefit.
- make your purchases as usual, and HHS will earn a percentage of your purchase.

## HHS Honors Veterans Day on our Facebook page . . .

The history of Highwood's military veterans does not begin with World War I. In 1886 civil and labor unrest in Chicago resulted in the Haymarket Riot. Chicago businessmen felt that a military presence near the city would help alleviate the tension. They purchased land in Highwood for a camp, and in 1887, a U.S. Army post was established as "Camp Highwood," which was renamed in 1888 for General of the Army Phillip Sheridan for his service in maintaining order after the Chicago Fire of 1871. Members of the Sixth Infantry Regiment arrived at "Camp Highwood" on November 8, 1887 which is the same year the village of Highwood was incorporated. This is when the history of Highwood's military veterans began.

Over the years many servicemen passed through Fort Sheridan. In the early days, some of them served in the Civil, Indian and Spanish American wars. 1ST SERGEANT RICHARD BURKE was one of them.

1st Sergeant Richard Burke served in Company A, 6th US Infantry. Burke's last three years' enlistment, which completed 30 years of service, was served at Fort Sheridan, Illinois. After his discharge, Richard, Melsine and two of their nine children, Albert and Harry, settled in Highwood where Sergeant and Mrs. Burke lived for the rest of their lives. Melsine Catherine Edwards Burke died on October 21, 1891. She was the first civilian buried in the Fort Sheridan Cemetery. 1st SGT Richard Burke died on June 3, 1912, and was buried beside Melsine."

Richard Burke was born in Limerick, Ireland in 1840. He immigrated to the United States and joined the Union Army in 1861. On duty in Virginia during the American Civil War, Richard met and married Melsine Edwards, who lived just beyond the outer defenses on Winchester, Virginia. Melsine followed Richard for 29 years through the Civil War (1861-1865), and then through the Indian wars (1865-1891) in the west.

# Four buildings Firemen of 6 suburbs fight blaze in Highwood



## Sherony Hardware Fire

At approximately 10 am, Sunday, November 21, 1976, Peter Pironi, who worked at the hardware store, discovered a fire in the basement and called the Highwood Volunteer Fire Department. Roughly nine hours later with six suburban fire departments engaged, the fire was brought under control after destroying a quarter block of retail stores and second floor apartments on Green Bay Road. At least 25 people were left homeless. Numerous businesses were damaged and Sherony Hardware was completely destroyed.

Per Domenic Sherony, his father, Frank Sherony, owned and operated the Sherony Hardware store until he retired in 1970. He had worked there 40 years and he sold the business to two other people. The building was owned by his father, Domenic. In May of 1976, Domenic sold all his property on Highwood Ave and Green Bay Rd to the city of Highwood for \$290,000. It was the cities plan to honor the current leases at that time but then to change the nature of this property. This property included the building housing six or seven businesses, approximately four to six offices and three apartments. The two men who purchased the hardware business from Frank in 1970 ran the establishment until November 21, 1976. This fire consumed all of the property that had been bought by the city except one building on Highwood Ave housing two business establishments.

## Remembrances: An Observer/Bob Giangiorgi

I was standing in the driveway with my dad, Reno, when we heard the fire alarm sound. We were just returning from running a few errands after attending mass at St. James. Dad immediately checked on the alarm, gathered his gear – bunker boots, pants, helmet and jacket – and we headed out to the fire.



A family wedding, my brother Ron's, brought me back to Highwood for a visit that weekend. I was then residing in Ohio and had not lived in the Highwood area for some 10 years. Hearing that the fire was Sherony's Hardware immediately brought back many memories. As a kid, Sherony's was always the go to store for so many family needs. My uncle's food market was a few doors north so I spent many hours as a child in that general area of Green Bay Road.

Within 7-10 minutes of the alarm, we arrived at the scene. Highwood Volunteer firemen were already engaged and the main focus was on the smoke coming out of the front of the store. It appeared the smoke was mainly confined to the



basement area and already a number of hose lines were pumping water into the store. Early on, there was focused activity from the front of the store in an effort to get water to the basement. I remember firemen going in the store, down into the basement and then climbing out. A major concern voiced immediately was the quantity of flammable products stored in the basement – paint, varnishes, etc. Another concern at the time was a fall hunting window display that included shotgun shells. Fire is one thing but ducking exploding shells was an additional hazard.

Early on it became apparent help would be needed to contain the fire, especially as the fire quickly spread through Sherony's. It seemed within an hour or so other fire departments came on the scene. Highland Park FD

was the first to answer what had become a multi-alarm fire.

I doubt I had my camera when I arrived at the fire, so I must have returned to my Dad's house to get my gear. Once back, I started to document the fire the best I could. I was shooting mainly black and white at the time and used Tri-X film which accounts for some of the graininess should you examine the photos closely. The weather also became a challenge.

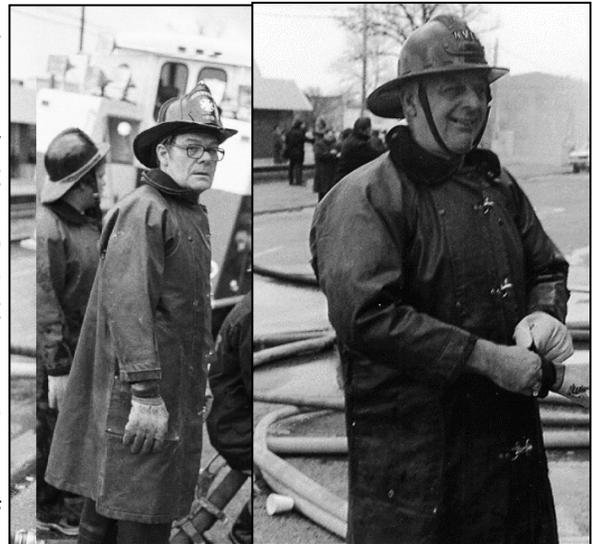
It was a cold, overcast November day with progressively deteriorating weather and snow starting late in the afternoon. Ironically, the weather turned out to be the least of the problems facing the 50 or so firemen working tirelessly during the day to bring the fire under control. The fire continued to spread to a number of buildings and the firemen ran into water pressure problems or simply did not have enough water to put on the fire. One of the attached articles mentions the smaller diameter water line on the west side of the railroad tracks as opposed to the 12 inch line on the east side of the tracks. Apparently, tunneling under the tracks and running lines to the west side was not feasible. I clearly remember at the time my dad being very frustrated they could not get the water they needed.

Throughout the afternoon, the fire refused to be controlled. I remember one scene where a group of three firemen were on a roof attempting to put water on an adjoining building when without warning threatening flames started from a window directly below them. Fortunately, they quickly were able to get out of immediate danger but it was a tense moment. There were many scenes like this as the afternoon wore on and the sheer number of firemen and equipment employed finally brought the fire under control. All without any serious injuries!

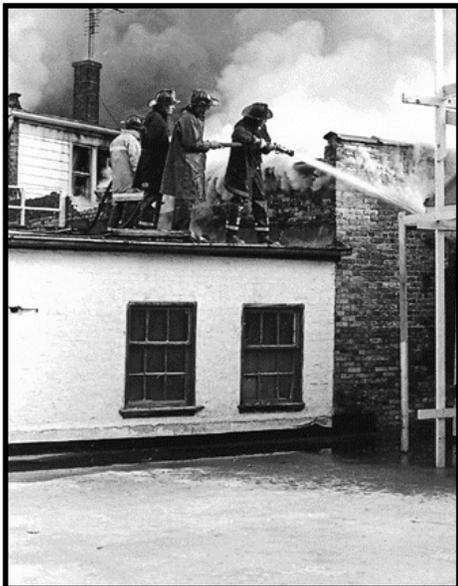
Should any of you spend time reviewing the available 90+ photo files you may see a fair number of shots of my family members – my dad, Reno, brother, Ron, and uncle, Bruno. All three were Highwood FD volunteers at the time and were involved throughout the day. Yes, I am guilty of family pride!

### **Remembrances: A Firefighter/ Ron Giangiorgi**

My wife Loretta and I were married on November 20, 1976 and had spent that evening celebrating with family and friends at our wedding reception which was held in the basement of the American Legion Hall on Highwood Avenue. Attending the reception were several members of the Highwood Volunteer Fire Department, which my dad and uncle had been members of for over 40 years, and who I had grown up knowing as surrogate "uncles" and friends. I had joined the Department earlier that year after returning to Highwood from Michigan so that I could attend Law School at De Paul. My wife and I said good-bye to our guests and headed out to spend the night at a local hotel. The plan was to have breakfast with her family the following morning before they headed back to Michigan.



I remember seeing smoke as I turned off Prairie Avenue onto Green Bay Road and headed north. I saw the fire trucks long before reaching the corner at Highwood Avenue. When I pulled up to the stop sign, Steve Pagliai was there and he opened my door and said, "Come on, we got a cooker." I took off my sport coat, threw it in the back seat of the car, told Loretta to say good-bye to her family for me, and that I would see her later. I went over and grabbed a coat, some boots and a helmet off the engine, and went over to see where I was needed.



By the time I arrived, the fire was being attacked from the front with the hope of containing it to the Hardware store. Attempts had been made to get into the basement but, because of the way the merchandise was stacked and the flammable nature of those materials, it was decided to cut into the floor and flood the basement from above. However, again because of the stacked merchandise deflecting the stream, it was difficult to get water on the fire, and some of the flammables in the basement started popping due to the heat and flames. A lot of what happened that day is somewhat of a blur, partially due to the thickness of the smoke and because I was ordered to give relief to and assist different teams throughout the day. A Mutual Aid call went out, and departments came from Highland Park, Lake Forest, Deerfield, Northbrook and Skokie. As you can tell from the photos, fire-fighting was different then and very few of us had air packs. I do remember going into the rear of the store from the parking lot behind the building where another hole had been cut into the floor to try and flood the fire from above. The smoke was heavy and we had to stay low while paint cans and ammunition were popping.

Unfortunately, the fire got into the walls and jumped across in the false ceilings to the adjoining storefronts and the apartments and offices above. I remember Dr. Anderson had his dentist office up there at some point, but I think it was gone by time of the fire. The fire spread to Fabbri's Tavern, and all the way down to Bernardi's Drug Store. I remember a lot of folks coming up and watching from Highwood Avenue, standing by the old Post Office down to the American Legion Hall. Some were just curious, but a lot of folks were offering assistance bringing thermoses of water, coffee and donuts. I remember the Salvation Army truck coming later in the day, and the firemen's wives were back at the Fire Station making sandwiches and coffee for the firemen who were trying to get some rest.

Looking at the photos which my brother took, I was able to recognize several of the firemen. There was the Chief Ron Grandt, David Campagni, my dad and uncle, Reno and Bruno Giangiorgi, Ray Tamarri, Reno Signorio, Ronnie Reeves, Boller Bolls (who married Kathy Mordini), Steve Pagliai, and David Fuller. Although the angles are not the best, I also think the photos show Chuck Ugaste in his Highland Park bunker and Jack Johnson with Northbrook.

The articles say the fire was fought for 9 hours, but it continued to flare up in certain areas throughout the evening. Being one of the younger members, we had the responsibility to hang the hoses in the tower to dry, and to repack the trucks. At that time my new bride and I were living over Caringello Paint on Waukegan Road and Highwood Avenue. I walked home from the station at around 2:00 am, and walked up the back stairs into the porch. I opened the back door to the apartment, and contemplated whether to clean up since I smelled so bad from the smoke. I had to work and had classes the next day, and had to get up to catch the 6:31 downtown, so I just decided to fall asleep right there on the floor. I found out later that my wife's sister had stopped at a gas station on their way home to call her. They heard about the fire on the radio while they were driving home, and they told her to change the sheets on the bed since they had left us a surprise of unpopped popcorn, and they didn't want me coming home to that after the fire. As it turned out, it wouldn't have mattered since I never made it to the bed. Needless to say, the date of the Sherony fire is one that I will not forget.

Contributors: Dominic Sherony, Ron Giangiorgi and Bob Giangiorgi

The Highwood Historical Society would like to thank Bob Giangiorgi for writing this article and making his photographs of the Sherony fire available to the Society. We would also like to thank his brother Ron, Domenic Sherony and Barbara Sherony Marionetti for sharing this event with our members.

## Highwood by the Numbers . . .

1890	451
1900	1575
1910	1219
1920	1446
1930	3590
1940	3707
1950	3813
1960	4499
1970	4973
1980	5455
1990	5331
2000	4143
2010	5,405
2020	?

### Recent Acquisitions, cont.

with her picture on the cover and news articles recognizing Riccardo as president of Cuore Arte Club and involvement with St. James and the Bocce Club

Kelly Kruegar: old metal object, not defined, found at the beach at Fort Sheridan in August, 2020

Jimmy Rizzi: Letters written to the mother of James Pasquale and American flag given to his family honoring his Uncle James Pasquale after his death in WW II. HHS has had that flag framed and it is on display at the Museum

Barbara Fabbri Terrell 1936 8th grade graduation picture from OTS plus many other school related items from her father Peter Fabbri, Also a 1936 National School Orchestra Contest program with names of several Highwood/Highland Park students who participated underlined in the program

Bee Warrens: glass bottle from Al and Jane Bar and Restaurant

**Thank You to All!!!**

## Board Spotlight: Adrienne Inman

*“Growing Up in a Small Town”*

I've been tracing my family's ancestry for almost 25 years. Thanks to the internet, Ancestry, Family Search and many wonderful people I've met online over the years, I've discovered a great deal about my Italian roots. I've even discovered family and friends in Italy who originated from some of my ancestors' communes and have written books about the history of these towns along with wonderful photographs.

Frank Bianchetta was born June 2, 1877 in Lorette, Loire, France but his parents were born in Salassa, Piedmont, Italy. His wife, Victoria Vecellio-None Bianchetta, was born November 18, 1887 in Auronzo, Veneto, Italy. Nonno arrived in America in December of 1895 and ended up in the small mining town of Carbon Hill. He later became a citizen, married Polly Enrietta and had two daughters. Polly died in 1905 and the youngest died in 1907 from measles. Nonno married our grandmother, Victoria Vecellio-None in November of 1907.

After they married, Nonno's older daughter, Mary, came to live with them. The family moved to Mark, Illinois. Our mother, Emma Marie Bianchetta, was born February 24, 1910 in Mark, Illinois and her sister, Rena, in 1912. There were two other children, John and Ida, but they each died before the age of three from diseases that could have been treated easily if they'd had antibiotics. Times were hard. Nonno worked in the mines for a short period of time, ran a saloon for a while, worked as a gardener and held a number of odd jobs. Our mother taught our grandmother English. She used her school books and they practiced reading together. Nonno already spoke English along with French and Italian. The family eventually moved to Highwood sometime around 1925.



L to R -Emma, Victoria, Frank & Rena Bianchetta

Mom worked at the Skokie Valley Laundry and then as a waitress several years later. On special occasions she and her friends would get on a train and go to the Aragon Ballroom in Chicago. All of the big bands played there from Wayne King, Benny Goodman to Glen Miller. They put on their best dress and fancy heels and danced in what was supposed to be one of the most beautiful ballrooms in the country.

Dad moved to Highwood in April of 1940. He'd grown up in a small mining town called Coalton, just south of Springfield, Illinois. Thanks to Mary and Victor Lenzi our parents met on a blind date. After that it's history.

They married on June 9, 1941. They lived in several apartments in town until they built their home on Jocelyn Place in 1952. Dad was a welder and Mom was a waitress. We lived two doors away from the Saratoga where Mom worked evenings. Our father was the babysitter. This meant that we were taken to a lot of movies, mostly westerns and war movies. Dad was not fond of musicals – he said why would anyone start singing in the middle of a sentence!

Mom sent us to St. James School. We were taught by nuns, wore uniforms, and when called on to answer a question, we had to stand next to our desks. We didn't change classrooms for different courses as they did at Oak Terrace. Some of our nuns were good teachers and others not so much. We sat at desks that had ink wells. The boys had a better use for those ink wells and several girls discovered the tips of their long braids were now dark blue. My cousin Alan and I managed to get into trouble when one day during recess we sneaked into the church and began lighting all of the candles. One fell onto the floor and we ran screaming outside telling everyone the church was on fire. Mom used that well know phrase "I suppose if he jumped into the lake, you'd do the same." I'm not so sure that Alan was the one who thought lighting the candles was a good idea.

At recess we played Dodge Ball, Red Rover, tag and other games. At the end of the day we went home, changed into our play clothes and went outside to play with the neighborhood kids. Jocelyn Place was home to the Rossi, Fraulini, Stefani, Santi, Romitte, Biondi, Brugioni and Canovi families. David Stefani was the only boy on our street at the time. He was extremely popular with all of us girls.

Our parents rarely ate out but every so often we'd go to Pierantoni's for the fish fry. Most of our parents' friends didn't go to restaurants. They visited with one another in their homes where the kitchen was the favorite gathering spot. Katie and Second Natta (he owned a shoe store), Fred and Flora Pattarozzi and Victor and Mary Lenzi were their closest friends.

Our parents shopped at Lenzi Brothers store, the 5&10, the A&P, and my favorite spot, the bakery. Our parents belonged to the Modenese Society; Mom belonged to the Italian Women's Prosperity Club, and it seemed that everyone belonged to a bowling league. They played at Mary Jane Lanes. The stores were closed on Sunday except for Laegeler's Drug Store. They were open on Sunday morning so people could purchase the Sunday paper. On weekends there were parties and dances at the Labor Union on Temple Avenue or the American Legion on Highwood Avenue. Sometimes it was the Lenzi Brothers Band and other times it was Jim Garino. There were quite a few weddings at the Recreation Center. They were mostly buffets. How else could you accommodate a few hundred guests?

The charm of living in Highwood was that it was a small town. And yes, the drawback was that everyone knew who we were. My sister, Sheila, and I were forbidden to cross the railroad tracks to go over to Laegelers with our friends. We would stand in front of Bernardi's Drug Store until they came back. Why? Because we were certain that if we crossed those tracks our parents would know about it before we got home.



**Emma and Frank Pedrucci**  
June 9, 1941



**Adrienne Pedrucci Inman &  
Sheila Pedrucci Dean**

I bring my granddaughters to Highwood often. I take them to the different places I lived. I show them my school, St. James, my church, the park where I played. And yes, I bring them to the cemetery. Where else can they view the graves of their great grandparents through their ggg grandparents. My grandchildren's mother is Polish. They attend Polish school on Saturdays so they can speak the language and learn Polish history. Family history is important. It tells us where we came from and gives us an appreciation of our ancestors.

Growing up in a small town is an experience for which I will be forever grateful. I never felt unsafe; our parents didn't worry about where we were, if they didn't know some other parent did. We played outside every chance we had. We didn't come in until it was pitch black. Most of us had cousins in school with us. My dad's sister, Mary Lenzini, lived two doors away. My cousin Alan and I were in the same class and graduated from St. James. Our cousin, Claudia Canovi, still lives on Jocelyn Place. I would not trade my childhood for anything.

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