

Highwood Historical Society

MAKING HISTORY EVERYDAY

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Letter from the President

Challenges for the Future:

- A building for HHS
- Increased Membership
- Fundraising to support our mission

The Board of Directors is committed to seek a building to house all our many artifacts. We are currently evaluating the prospect of submitting a proposal to lease the empty Historic Highwood Fire Station. Many of you have fond memories of individuals or events that were there. The biggest challenge for us will be funding any renovations etc that would be needed to turn this building into a Historical Museum. This will take the commitment, support and many donations to make it possible. **YOUR INPUT AND HELP IS VITAL TO US. PLEASE CALL 847-682-9039 OR MAIL or EMAIL YOUR SUGGESTIONS, ENCOURAGEMENT AND SUPPORT ASAP---** highwoodhistory@gmail.com. It will take a strong united front to make this happen.

Thank you for renewing or becoming a new member of HHS. All the work, the events, the programs we plan are for you. We hope they evoke happy memories, shared times and renewed faith in family and community.

Fundraising is a necessary part of every organization. This year we will once again hold our annual HHS raffle that could win you a \$500, \$100, or a \$50 Visa card! The winning ticket will be drawn at our winter holiday dinner that will again be held at Froggy's Restaurant on Wednesday, Dec. 7th. You will be sent more information soon. Save the Date – Get your raffle tickets from a member of the Board, at the HHS booth at the Wednesday Evening Market, or contact us. You need not be present to win a prize.

All Aboard! You are invited to a special presentation on Thursday, September 1st at Oak Terrace School in Highwood. We are honored to have Joe Stupar and Norm Krentel from the Illinois Railway Museum speak and share stories of the North Shore Line Railway. Highwood was the site of the Chgo & NS Line administrative building and the storage yards and shops. The train line closed in 1963. Many Highwood residents were employed by the Railroad or used the trains as their major mode of transportation. Plan to attend and invite your friends and family. You won't want to miss this free program sponsored by HHS. There will also be time for you to share your special train memories.

Continue sending us items of historical interest. They are the treasures that shape our destiny and motivate us to do more research into Highwood's rich heritage. Stay involved. We enjoy hearing from you.

Teta Minuzzo, President

Recent Acquisitions:

- Bruce Bertucci – Many photos and copies of OTS reunions, OTS graduation photos, 1932 Highwood Chamber banquet, 1980 signed photo by Pavarotti with Gloria Linari and copy of 1956 St James Girls BB Team
- Lisa Cervac - Chicago Sun Times articles related to death of President John F, Kennedy (1963) and Touchdown on the Moon (1969); Several issues of Highwood News and Highland Park News; Notebook with Proposal for Highwood Towers, 1996; Videos with developer proposals for the Fort Sheridan property; Video of Closing Ceremony of Fort Sheridan; copy of Laws of Illinois, 1907-08 plus many other items.
- Joan Sheffer – Xerox copy newspaper photo and article, 1963 with tribute to Msgr Gleason from St. James on his 25th year as pastor; Anniversary Issue HP News, April 29, 1948.
- Norm Carlson - Editor of *First & Fastest* (Train Magazine)– Summer, 2016, Autumn 2012, and Winter 2013 + *The Road of Service* (Perspectives on the North Shore Line) and book Before The North Shore Line by Edward W. Tobin.

**9th ANNUAL
TERRIFIC TOMATO CONTEST
Wednesday, Aug. 24, 2016**

Are you ready to rumble? Last year’s grand champion Kathy Rafferty is. The summer growing season is well underway and the Highwood Historical Society is thrilled to hold its 9th Annual Terrific Tomato Contest. Join us as we celebrate the "art" of gardening in Highwood and add information to our ongoing Highwood Homes Project.

All residents of Highwood and all members of the Historical Society are eligible to submit their tomatoes to win the title of Most Terrific Tomato in Town and corresponding prize of \$100.00. Tomatoes will be weighed, calibrated, judged, and displayed at the City of Highwood’s GarlicFest on Wednesday, August 24th. **To enter the contest . . .** Sign-up in person on Wednesdays at any Evening Market in Everts Park, call 847-682-9039, or email: highwoodhistory@gmail.com. **To volunteer . . .** Join the pick-up team on Tuesday night, August 23rd. Meet the contestants and see their amazing gardens. **Just want to see the incredible produce of Highwood gardeners?** Then come out and support the Highwood Historical Society as we crown this year’s Most Terrific Tomato! Don’t forget to vote for the “People’s Choice Award” with your donations.



Visit our website, www.highwoodhistoricalsociety.com to view our video of Highwood’s abundant gardens.

**The Old “Octopus Tree”
Reflections of a Bygone Era
By Gene Fabbri**

The other day I was mowing the parkway grass in front of my home while swarms of Mom’s were dropping off their kids for organized sports at the Highwood Ball Park. I reflected on a bygone era of unorganized summer activity when I was their age, that centered around a huge old willow tree located on the N.W. corner of Western and Burchell Avenues.

This infamous willow tree had limbs protruding in every direction hence the name “Octopus Tree” given to it by earlier generations of kids eager to test their climbing skills. Unfortunately, by the time my family migrated from Detroit in the summer of ‘47 the once mighty tree was just a stump maybe 12 ft. high that was deemed a traffic hazard. This didn’t matter to a 12 year old trying to adjust to a new life in the small town of Highwood. The “Octopus Tree” quickly became a beacon for me and my new friends. We would gather there all times of the day during the summer vacation to build tree houses or to play “King of the Hill” or to just have an observation post to hang out. Building materials would magically appear from various constructions sites as our special projects were undertaken.



Photo taken in 1965 shortly before demolition began. The auto had just collided with the stump with major damage.

There was no planning, no organization, no coaching—just grab a hammer, saw, and nails and start building something. What a time it was! As we grew older and became too cool for this activity the torch was handed down to the next generation of kids eager to play on what was affectionately known as the “Octopus Tree”.

Eventually the city of Highland Park deemed it too dangerous and started the demolition process in 1965 thus ending an era of unorganized independent play for hundreds of kids from Highwood and H.P. that will never be repeated.

So next time you are cruising on the new paved Western Avenue at the Burchell stop sign, look to the West and reflect on a simpler way of life that is lost forever.

The Early Railroads
Excerpt from the Highwood Centennial Book,
100 Years of Progress 1887-1987

In 1855, the Chicago, St. Paul and Fond du Lac Railway served the rapidly growing population of the North Shore. This line, sold in 1859, was renamed the Chicago and Northwestern Railway. The Chicago and Northwestern Transportation Company of today is the railroad that continues to service Highwood at present.

A small railroad through Highland Park, Highwood, and Fort Sheridan was finished on September 10, 1897. This line was bought by an existing Waukegan street railroad named the Bluff City Electric Railway Company. In 1898, the Bluff City Line became a part of the Chicago and Milwaukee Electric Railway Company, which ran to Highland Park. This railroad went bankrupt and was reorganized.

Samuel Insull bought the Chicago and Milwaukee Electric Railway Company on May 1, 1916 and, on June 12, he changed the name of the railroad to the Chicago, North Shore, and Milwaukee Railroad. By this time, service between Chicago and Milwaukee was completed. The line became connected to a web of Insull-owned short lines, but then went bankrupt in the aftermath of the Great Depression. The railroad continued operating with a receiver until it was reorganized on November 1, 1946. After much maneuvering by the railway officials, continued inferior service, and the decay of equipment, the railroad closed down on January 21, 1963. This line had directly affected Highwood's economy throughout the years, both because it permitted out of town customers to travel to Highwood business establishments and because many Highwood residents were employees of the line.

Me, My Dad, and the North Shore Line
by Carol (Ray) Crovetti

I was born the middle child of Donald Fred and Ruth Ray, at Highland Park Hospital in 1947. My Dad worked as a motorman for the North Shore Line Railroad for 15 years, from 1940 to 1955. When we got old enough, either my two older brothers or myself and younger sister were allowed to accompany him to work for the day. So in 1954 and 1955, when I was 7 and 8 years old, I was finally allowed to share time with my Dad doing what he loved so much, driving the trains for the North Shore Line.

I remember my mother awakening me from a deep sleep when it was still dark outside to help get my sister and me ready to spend the day with Dad on the train. To me, it seemed like the middle of the night, but it had to be an early morning start or we never would have made it in time for Dad to start his morning run to Chicago. We would arrive at the Round House, "The Barn" as they often called it, in Highwood to start our day riding the rails with our Dad. His main run was from Highwood to the "Loop" in Chicago. On occasion, we also went along on days when he had a run from Highwood to Milwaukee. After arriving in the Loop, Dad would get an early lunch break and we would join other North Shore Line employees, collectorettes, and other motormen etc. at a local café for lunch and conversation. Just before one of these lunch gatherings, I vividly remember my Dad pulling out a clean white handkerchief, something he always carried with him, spitting on it and then wiping some dirt of my cheek. He wanted his girls to look perfect before

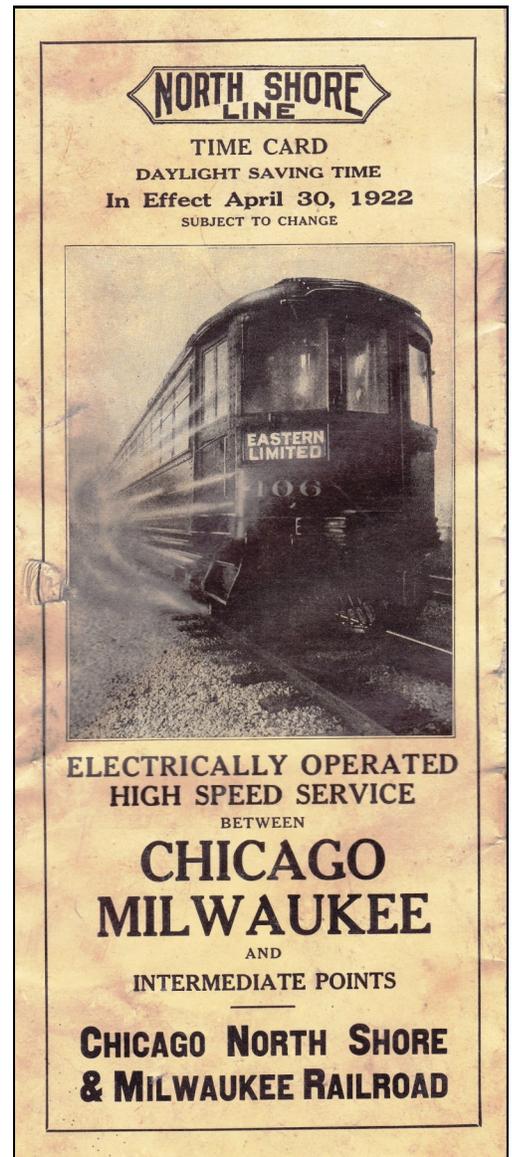
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The Highwood Historical Society is proud to sponsor
"The North Shore Line & Highwood"
 presented by
 Norm Krentel and Joe Stupar
 of the
 Illinois Railway Museum—Union, Illinois

Thursday, September 1, 2016
 7:00-9:00pm

Oak Terrace School
 240 Prairie Avenue
 Highwood

Free Admission, Open to the Public





meeting his fellow North Shore Line colleagues.

The image of the train's interior is somewhat faded in my memory now, however the smells, the touch of the train steering column and the excitement I felt on these occasions are still quite vivid. He would take each of us onto his lap and allow us to hold the large wooden steering-breaking column that maneuvered the train as we went along the tracks. The smell of the electric motor that propelled the train was very pungent, a weird smell, hard to describe, almost like an electric cord burning. Getting to join my Dad at work for the day, sitting in the engine of an electric train and assisting in its movement down the tracks, or so he let us believe, was quite an experience. However, one of the true highlights of the day, for me, came at the end of the day.

As we neared the Highwood Round House, my Dad would tell us that we could now walk up and down in the empty cars of the train and help clean up any trash we found. But he also told us that passengers often dropped coins on the floor or in the seats and that if we found any it was ours to keep. Needless to say, my sister and I would spend our findings the next day at the candy stand on Central Avenue in Highland Park.

SUPPORT THE HHS!

Purchase Your Annual Raffle Tickets
in person at our Booth

Every Wednesday—Everts Park

\$10.00 ea. or 3 for \$25.00

1st Prize, \$500 Visa Gift Card

2nd Prize, \$100.00, 3rd Prize, 50.00

Prizes will be awarded at the
HHS Holiday Dinner.

Winner need not be present.

Last year's Raffle proceeds enabled us
to purchase a much-needed
Portable Sound System!

Invite a friend or relative to join

Highwood Memories

by Shirley Cabri

My maiden name is Conwell. My mother's was Panerali. She was married to my dad and they were divorced when I was 3 months old and I was up in Highwood every summer with my aunt and uncle, Theodore and Aldina Minorini as I grew up. They lived at 238 Everts Place, Highwood. I lived there every summer and I went to school in Chicago. I went to school in Highwood. In fifth grade Sister Joanna Marie was my teacher at St. James. Then I went back to Chicago and graduated from Our Lady of the Angels in Chicago in 1943. I came back here to live with my cousin Helen Minorini who married Rudy Notagiacomo. He was going into service and she didn't want to give up her apartment on Jeffrey's Place so I lived with her and I went through the whole legal process, probate court, because I was a minor and needed guardianship. It was a long process. Had to go into probate and it was published in all of the papers downstate. My father was from Decatur and I was hoping that he wouldn't want to come back and contest the guardianship. It worked out and I was living with my aunt and uncle until I got married.

I began working at Illinois Bell when I was 16. There were a bunch of us from Highwood working there, including Olga Amidei and all of the girls. It was great. I met Aldo when I was a junior in high school. He was four years older than me. When he graduated from high school in 1943 he was 17. He joined the Navy and took his boot training up in Great Lakes. He was in service about three years. I met him down at the Highwood beach where a bunch of us kids would meet in the summer. When Aldo and I married we had to go to classes at the church. Aldo was baptized but he'd never had his First Communion, etc. The priest asked if he was going to raise our children as Catholics and he said he would. Many years later, we were in Church on Christmas and as a surprise for the family, he made his First Communion and then his Confirmation. His sponsors were Clyde Canovi and Bruno Somenzi.

I grew up on Everts Place and as far as I'm concerned it was the best street in town. We kids had nothing, no air conditioning, no pools, no camps. We played baseball in the street, Red Rover Red Rover, kick the can, tag, hide and seek. We'd sit on the curbs and just talk. My uncle would bring us a loaf of bread out of the oven from the bakery and we would sit out there and eat bread. We really had a great time. We all knew each other. It was like having one great big happy family in the 40's.

When we were in our teens we'd go downtown on the train and go to the Oriental Theatre or Chicago Theatre. They had a stage show first followed by a movie. We were all dressed up. We even wore hats and then we'd go to the Union train station. They always sold flowers at the station and we all bought a corsage so we looked like big shots. We'd have lunch there and take a train home. One of my favorite songs was "In the Mood" and anything by Glenn Miller. On Everts Place we

always had a good time.

My family went to *Santi's Tavern* on Sundays, after dinner. We were all related to the Santi's. My grandmother, Desi Saielli's mother, Yole Benvenuti's grandmother and John Leonardi's mother were all sisters, so we had a large family. When Casper Santi had the tavern all of the relatives would go up there. They were from Pievepelago in Modena. On Sundays when they came up from Chicago my aunt always had dinner. My uncle had the big oven at the bakery and he would cook all of the chickens and the pasta. We had a lot of people for dinner. They'd be outside in the yard and then they'd get into their cars and go see Casper and have fun. Willie's *My Favorite Inn* was next door even then. When Casper died Ernie and Gop ran *Santi's*. After Ernie died it was eventually sold.

We grew up in a fun time and Sunday was always a picnic. My aunt and uncle my mother's one brother and sister in law lived in the upstairs apartment in the same house in Highwood where I lived. Their names were Dominic and Julia Panetali. They had two children, Catherine and Domenic Jr. who they called Buddy

When I was growing up I remember Mayor Portillia (lived on Clay), maybe before that it was Mocogni and then John Frantonious, Dave Santi. I can't remember who was Mayor during the war. When the war started I was 12 years old. My older cousins could go to the USO. The sailors and soldiers would come to the USO from Great Lakes and Ft. Sheridan. My aunt, Mary Somenzi, Mary Baldi, and all of the older women worked at the USO. They made coffee and sandwiches for the servicemen. It was nice. It was home for lots of these young men. They were 17 and 18 years old.

I remember the sign in front of City Hall with all of the names of the men in service and those who died. They had commemorations. It was very sad. Jimmy Colo and his mother lived on Highwood Avenue. He was 18 years old when he was killed on Christmas day. So many young men died in the war.

I remember the troop trains coming in to Ft. Sheridan. They had steam engines, using coal. White flags were on the engines and that's how you knew it was a troop train. The

cars had baggage on them. When the servicemen disembarked we would wave at them. It was very emotional.

Some of the priests at St. James were Monsignor Gleason, Father Ward, My children are working on our family history and that's how we discovered that they were married by Father Holly. He was the first pastor at St. James. I remember Fathers Duare, Shea, Monaco and Brocolo.

The only immediate members of my family who live in Highwood besides myself are my daughter Susan and her husband Robert Bernardi on Maple Avenue. The house they live in is where her husband was raised. My other two daughters, Shirley and her husband Dennis Rumrill live in California as does her sister, Gail and Bill and her daughter Casie.

If you are interested in sharing your story, please contact Adrienne Inman at 847-682-9039.

SAVE THE DATE:

Wednesday, August 24th—
Terrific Tomato Contest
Everts Park

Thursday, September 1st—
North Shore Line Presentation, 7:00-9:00pm
Oak Terrace School

Wednesday, December 7th—
Highwood Holiday Social
Froggy's Restaurant
(Details to follow)

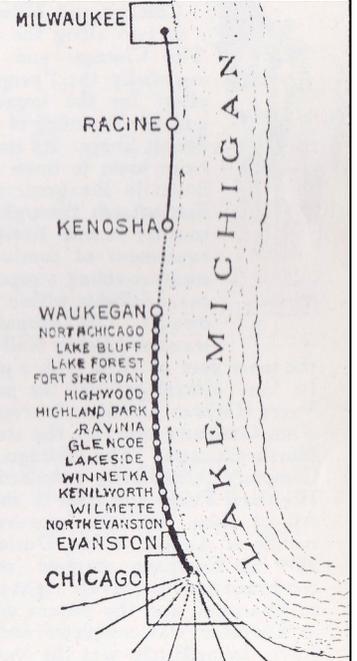
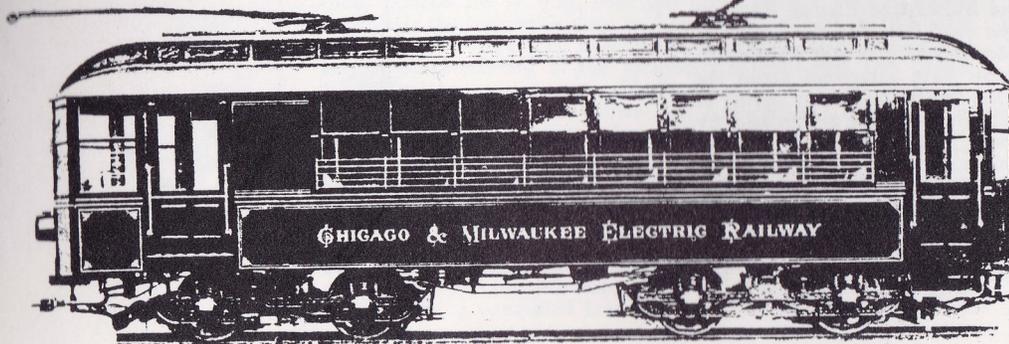


L-R: Olga Mordini Amidei, Bridget "Bena" Mordini Womack, Mary Mordini Pasquesi (back row), Delores Mordini Haincheck, Shirley Cornwell Cabri

HIGHWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY
PO BOX 132
HIGHWOOD, IL 60040-0132



Along the ...North Shore



Glimpses
Along the line of
The Chicago and Milwaukee
Electric Railway

GENERAL OFFICES—1103 STOCK EXCHANGE, CHICAGO SUPERINTENDENT'S OFFICE—HIGHWOOD, ILL.

Cover of an 1899 booklet, "Along the North Shore" issued by the Chicago and Milwaukee Electric Railway, per *Days of the North Shore Line*, by George V. Campbell, 1985.