

# FLASHBACK

THE HAMMOND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SEPTEMBER 2025

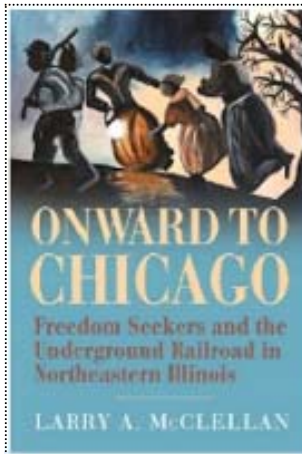
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## UNDERGROUND RAILROAD PRESENTATION

Saturday, September 6th 2025  
10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Hammond Public Library  
Community Room  
564 State Street Hammond, IN



Our upcoming September program will feature Dr. Larry McClellan, an esteemed historian and founding member of Governors State University (GSU), who will give a presentation on the Underground Railroad in our area.

His consulting, research and writing focus on freedom seekers and the Underground Railroad, and on African American and regional history south of Chicago. Major publications include 25 articles in the Encyclopedia of Chicago [2025]; The Underground Railroad South of Chicago [2019], co-author of To the River, The Remarkable Journey of Caroline Quarlls, a Freedom Seeker on the Underground Railroad [2019]. Onward to Chicago: Freedom Seekers and the Underground Railroad in Northeastern Illinois was published by Southern Illinois University Press in 2023. This received the national 2023 Memorial Prize of the Advancement of

Knowledge from the Underground Railroad Free Press. In 2022 he received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Illinois State Historical Society for his contributions to Illinois history and, in 2024, they gave his latest book their Award for Superior Achievement.

Larry has spoken at five Illinois state history conferences and three national conferences of the National Parks Service Network to Freedom program. He was the principal researcher for listings on the NPS Network to Freedom national register of Underground Railroad sites in Crete, Lockport, and Chicago. Some of his work can be found at [\[illinoisundergroundrailroad.info\]](http://illinoisundergroundrailroad.info).

For ten years, he wrote a monthly regional history column for The Southtown/Star newspapers. Larry graduated from Occidental College in Los Angeles, with a year at the University

of Ghana in West Africa, and additional studies in Great Britain and Jerusalem. He has served on the boards of the Illinois State Historical Society and the Will County Historical Society and has given lectures and programs across Illinois. Currently he is President of the Little Calumet River Underground Railroad Project and serves on the Illinois Underground Railroad Task Force.

*This event open to members and their guests. If you are not a member, we invite you to join. Membership applications will be available at the meeting.*

### PLEASE TAKE NOTE:

**A Board of Directors Meeting is scheduled for 9 a.m.** prior to the general meeting. All officers and board members are asked to attend the board meeting.

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The Hammond Historical Society — President, Tom Novak — Vice President, Keri Tharp  
Secretary, William J. Uzdanovich — Treasurer, Taylor Hubbard — Officers serving for 2025-2026

Editor in Chief — William J. Uzdanovich  
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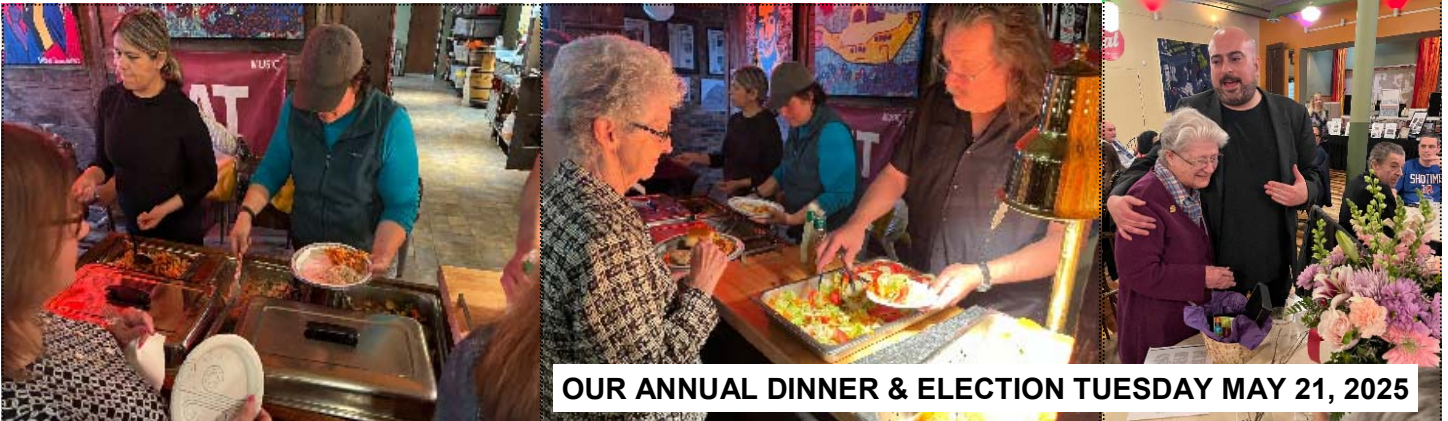


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## OTHER NEWS and OTHER BUSINESS

### HAMMOND HISTORICAL SOCIETY ACTIVITIES



OUR ANNUAL DINNER & ELECTION TUESDAY MAY 21, 2025

#### ANNUAL DINNER

Our Annual Dinner took place on Tuesday, May 21, 2025 at the Eat Restaurant in Downtown Hammond. One major change going forward is that Peg Evans has retired from the Board of Directors after a 25+ year run on the board. We are so sad to see her go, but she promised to continue to help at the Oak Hill tours and other events.

One other change is that Brian Poland is stepping down as treasurer. Thankfully, he will initially assist the incoming Treasurer, Taylor Hubbard, and we are grateful that he will be staying on as a board member. Being treasurer is not an easy task, it's a lot of work. We are appreciative for Brian and all the hard work he has put into this position all these years. And we congratulate and welcome Taylor and our other two new Board Directors— Amanda King and Diane Hensley!

#### LIVE IN THE VILLE

We attended our first Live in the Ville this year during its two-day run. Live in the Ville is in its seventh year; it takes place along Kennedy Avenue in Downtown Hessville.



LIVE IN THE VILLE JUNE 6 and 7, 2025 IN HESSVILLE



NATIONAL NIGHT OUT AUGUST 5, 2025

#### NATIONAL NIGHT OUT

We were excited to have a table and to participate for the first time at the Annual National Night Out held at the Wolf Lake Pavilion.

This family-oriented event draws attention to community partnerships with police and fire departments, and first responders.

#### NOTICE TO MEMBERS

**NOW ACCEPTING DEBIT / CREDIT CARDS**

Pay or Renew Memberships  
Make a Charitable Donation  
Online or at our Events

Accepted forms of payment:



SCAN QR CODE





## OAK HILL CEMETERY TOUR

Join the Hammond Historical Society from 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm (last tour departs at 3:45 pm) on Sunday, October 5, 2025, as we conduct guided walking tours while honoring the 140th anniversary of the cemetery.

Located in Hammond at 6445 Hohman Avenue, Oak Hill was created in 1885 by Hammond's founder and first mayor, Marcus Morton Towle. Since the time-period of its founding was the Gilded Age, we will discuss some of the industries built by the Hammond's founders interred here.

This is our 26th tour, a tradition that began in the late 1990s by the Hammond Library's beloved local history librarian, Suzanne Geis Long. We continue this tradition in memory of her.

Free parking and entrance are located on Kenwood Street, located one block north of 165th Street. The tour fee is \$5.00 for 18+. Children under 18 may attend for free. We will have local history books and water for sale. We now accept credit cards! Be prepared to be on your feet for 30 minutes or more.

## CEMETERY HISTORY

Located on the northeast corner of 165th Street and Hohman Avenue, it is the 2nd oldest extant cemetery in North Township, Lake County, Indiana. This cemetery sat at the southern city limits prior to the 1923 annexation of the South Hammond area.

Prominent people interred here include Civil War, WWI, and WW2 veterans, the Hohmans, the Sohls, the Towles, the Readers, Thomas Hammond, Billy Gostlin, P.H. Mueller, Henry Schrage (founder of Centier Bank), Paul Parduhn (one of the founding fathers of the NFL), and many more.

The 25-acre site has over 13,000 interred, with 2,500+ plots still available.



OAK HILL CEMETERY GROUNDS

# RETAIL REFLECTIONS

*Remembering Stores  
from the city's past*



Hammond's newest store opened for business on Friday, November 12, 1937. The R & S Shoe store that was located at 5707 Hohman Avenue opened its doors stocked with shoes, boots, and slippers along with hosiery and purses.

Hammond's newest store was considered modern in every aspect including air-conditioning that was to be installed before the torrid summer weather was set to begin in 1938.

The R & S shoe store was part of one of the most efficient and largest shoe organizations in America and was said to employ only residents from Hammond and vicinity. The store featured and specialized in moderate priced footwear, with satisfaction guaranteed with every pair of shoes—or your money cheerfully refunded.

Nationally advertised brands such as Fashion Bilt, Kiddie Kickers, Red Goose, Posture Builders, Arch Wedge and Madison Square were available in all sizes and styles.

During its grand opening event, the store gave away a free over-night bag with every purchase of women's shoes.

The R & S Shoe store had leased the entire 50 foot frontage of the Hohman Avenue building from A. Murray Turner and subleased a portion of it to the Peggy Hale dress shop, which opened its store a week before. The Peggy Hale store featured a full line of dresses. Along with the R & S store, the Women's Hat Company also had rented space in the building and had just recently opened its doors.

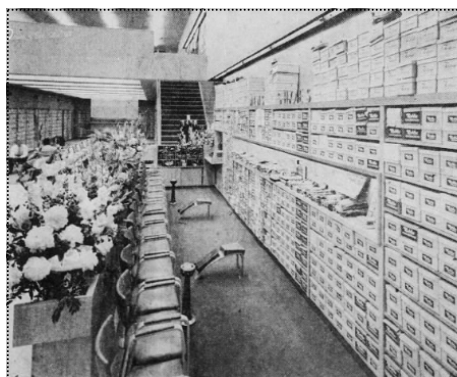
In late October of 1944, a fire on the third floor of the structure did an estimated \$100,000 in damage to the interior of the R & S Shoe store below and the adjacent stores in the building.

After months of construction the R & S Shoe store reopened in mid-June of 1949 with a 3-day long gala celebration to mark the completion of a vast remodeling project.

Three years of planning and one year of construction that have gone into the project had transformed the former Towle Opera House into an ultra modern fire proof store of outstanding beauty with a total cost of \$250,000.



The new R & S Shoe store featured separate departments for men and women, and a specially decorated mezzanine level for the children's department. Barricades covering the storefront were removed the evening before the store's grand opening, showcasing its modern glass display windows.



*This view shows the greatly enlarged, separate department for men.*



*Here is the cleverly decorated Mezzanine designed to appeal to both boys and girls.*

## 1949 Store Renovation Project



Here we can see that the remodeling work that had originally been planned in 1947 when loose mortar began falling down onto Hohman Avenue endangering shoppers walking below, is well underway.

The photo shows workmen tearing off the third floor of the old Towle Opera House. The Hammond landmark was once the center of Hammond and

and the Calumet Region cultural activities which was then home to the R & S Shoe Store.

The total cost to renovate the old Hammond landmark was pegged at \$250,000. Despite the structure being a historical landmark, it was considered a "fire trap".

*Source information and Photos:  
NWI Times/Newspapers.com*



# HAMMOND'S OLDEST SHOE STORE from 1882 to 1971

## The Schloer and Sons Shoe Store at 144 State Street

This story was published on December 7, 1971. The old Schloer and Sons shoe store that was located at 144 State Street was set to permanently close the following week. The store had been in business since 1882.

Three generations of Schloers have managed this store and made a good living there.

Jacob Schloer founded the business and opened the first store on the corner of Hohman Avenue and State Street on September 2, 1882. In 1899, Jacob moved the store to 144 State Street, just a bit further west. From the ground up, the "new" store was built to stock, display and sell shoes.

It was built so well the only things changed in it since 1899 had been the lighting and the flooring.

The old gas lights were replaced with electric light bulbs in huge ornate glass globes. Neon lighting eventually replaced the old bulbs and globes, but some of the old globes were saved. They're somewhere in the basement, dusty but intact.

The old board flooring was covered with tile in the display and service area many years ago. But the shelving, drawers and white oak benches that were covered with leather were still the same.

Nonetheless, three generations of Schloers have built and maintained their store on personal service, quality and fit. In a nation where small businesses are slowly being relegated to being just a memory, Schloers' Shoe store was an anachronism. But that was what made it priceless as old businesses go.

Jacob Schloer for years called the store the "Hammond Shoe House." He took his son Bill into the business in 1915, and son Pat came aboard in 1922.

"I don't recall when the name was changed again," said Bill's son, William T. Schloer. With Harold Hepner, he was the store's proprietor when it closed down. "Harold and I both have been here for more than 30 years."

"In the past 90 years," Bill said, "I'm willing to bet we've turned over almost a million pairs of shoes of all descriptions, including boots, sandals and all kinds of men's and women's footwear."

The store's two front doors were topped by a vintage and original burst of ornate leaded glass that collectors have been trying to buy for decades.

Bill Schloer went into the back room and came back out holding a pair of ancient footwear in each hand.

"Thought you'd like to see these," he said. "The children's shoes were made in 1852. The women's shoes [high tops] were made in 1882."

Both pairs looked new. It seemed impossible that anything could look so new after more than a century. The women's shoes had a union seal stamped into the arch of their shiny soles.

Even the cash register and the safe in the back of the store were collector's items, even though they had been in constant use over the years.

"Originally shoes were custom made," Schloer said. "Then, in the 1890s, factories in the East started selling them in bulk lots to shoe stores."



*William Schloer and Harold Hepner view old shoes.*



*A Hammond Shoe House ad from February 15th, 1907*

"In 1890," he added, "a good pair of men's shoes cost about \$3.50. Twenty years later they jumped to \$5.00, people fell over."

Hopefully, most if not all of the red, green, orange and white shoe boxes on the shelves will be gone when I close up the shop.

Multiply all of the bending, stooping and climbing required of a shoe salesman to find and at least try on at least one pair on for every customer times that by 30 years. "Today," Schloer said "it's a young man's game."

*Article source and images: NWI Times via Newspapers.com*



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

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## SHOES THAT FIT

*Because they're fitted by X-RAY*

When you buy shoes make sure you're getting the utmost value in style... long wear... and general satisfaction. But that isn't all.

Make sure you also get the absolute assurance of a perfect fit, and that can only be achieved by the known scientific method of fitting your shoes with an X-Ray fitting.

One pair of misfitted shoes may start you on the road to foot troubles. Why take the chance, when it costs you nothing to be sure of a perfect fit? Well, that was the sales pitch. As we would learn later, that really wasn't such a good idea after all.

A published newspaper report in April of 1950 revealed a detailed study of shoe-fitting fluoroscopes [X-Ray machines] like the ones that were used in some 900 shoe stores in the neighboring state of Illinois—and that study showed the need to restrict and limit their use.

The survey showed that 75 of the 100 machines picked at random in the state were exposing persons being fitted for shoes to excessive amounts of radiation. Also, in 64% of the cases studied, shoe clerks were also being endangered by the radiation from the fluoroscopes.

It also mentioned that children were subjected to the greatest hazards from such machines, because they usually received more fittings over a given period.

It was pointed out in the article that persons should have no more than 12 fluoroscopic shoe fittings in a year. The length of time the person's foot is under the X-Ray beam should not be more than five seconds during any of those fittings.

It is important to note that almost all shoe clerks that were interviewed were of the opinion that the chief value of the fluoroscopes was in "closing" a sale. The device was of no principal orthopedic value to the average person, although some clerks stated that they can at least prove to a customer that shoes were not too long or short.

The advertisement to the right of this story was one of many that customers found in the late 1930s, 1940s and early 1950s published in our local paper.

**"Insist on X-Ray Fitting for Foot Health"**

Article source:  
NWI Times via Newspapers.com  
Illustration:  
NWI Times via Newspapers.com

**YOUR ENTIRE FAMILY NEEDS X-RAY SHOE FITTING!**



**X-RAY SHOE FITTING**

The magic eye of our X-Ray machine tells you if your shoes fit you. Perhaps you have no trouble in fitting your feet...but do you know if your shoes fit? Or do you know by number and take a chance? At Goldblatt's you see, before you buy, how shoes fit. That's the modern way to fit shoes. It takes but one misfit...to start foot troubles...with our X-Ray equipment...at no extra cost—you and I can see the exact size and shape YOUR foot needs. Come in at your earliest convenience, take advantage of the only correct way to buy shoes. Your feet may need correction. Bring the children. Don't take a chance ordering shoes by number or depending on the measuring stick.

**GOLDBLATT BROS.**  
Hohman Avenue at Sibley

**"Insist on X-Ray Fitting for Foot Health"**

\* X-Ray Shoe Fitting, a priceless service, at no cost . . . assures every member of the family a perfect fitting.