

Long Grove History

LONG GROVE LIVING
MAGAZINE
JUNE 2026

Forged in Long Grove

For half a century the loudest sound at the downtown crossroads was not the church bell or a passing wagon — it was hammer on anvil. A short visit with the men at the forge.

By Aaron Underwood · Long Grove Historical Society



LONG GROVE · 1892 A working smithy at the downtown crossroads — **George Umbdenstock, Sr.** at the anvil with his son **George, Jr.** at the forge. Note the hand-lettered sign on the brick chimney: **NO CREDIT — CASH NOW.**

When people think of old Long Grove they may picture the covered bridge, the old stores, or a quiet country crossroads. But for many years one of the most important sounds in town was the ringing clang of hammer on anvil.

In the 1800's a blacksmith was not just a man who made horseshoes. He was part mechanic, part metalworker, part repair shop, and part problem-solver. If a farmer had a broken tool, a wagon that needed fixing, or a horse that needed shoeing, the blacksmith was the person to see. Long Grove grew up in the 1840's at the crossing of two old trails and became a service center for the farms around it — so trades like blacksmithing sat right at the heart of village life.



The Smiths at the Crossroads.

Three family names carry most of the smithing story in early Long Grove. They worked the same downtown corner for more than half a century, often passing the trade — and the building — from one to the next.

Daniel Rose

FIRST SMITHY ·
NW CORNER

One of the earliest blacksmiths in town, Rose operated the village's first smithy on the northwest corner of the crossroads before the Umbdenstock family took it over. Later accounts also credit him with building the first home on the hotel site, before the Zimmer family enlarged it into a hotel and eating place. If you could visit early Long Grove, Daniel Rose would be one of the people you would want to meet — though you might want to stand back a little from the sparks.

Louis Bollenbach

SMITH,
WHEELWRIGHT ·
TO ORDER

Historical accounts have Bollenbach running a blacksmithing, horseshoeing, repair, and wagon-making business out of his shop — the family even advertised that they made *wagons and buggies to order*, which in 1880's Long Grove was about as close as you came to a custom car dealer.

The Umbdenstocks

GEORGE, SR. &
GEORGE, JR.

The Umbdenstock family carried the trade into a second generation. George, Sr. followed Daniel Rose at the corner; when George, Jr. came of age and entered the business he built a new smithy of his own. The picture on the cover of this issue is from 1892, and shows a young George, Jr. working alongside his father.

So when people walk downtown today, they are not just passing shops and restaurants. They are walking through a place where sparks once flew, iron rang under the hammer, and a handful of local blacksmiths helped hold the whole community together.



VINTAGE DAYS / JULY 25 & 26

A working blacksmith will be downtown giving live demonstrations — come see the sparks fly and hear the ring of hammer on anvil. Times and location at [LONGGROVEHISTORY.ORG](https://LongGroveHistory.org).

Interested in helping with events like this? The Historical Society is looking for volunteers, ideas, and planning hands. LongGroveHistory.org