

Approximate boundaries:

N-W. Green Tree Rd; S-W. Florist Ave;

E-N. Teutonia Ave; W-N. 43<sup>rd</sup> St

# NORTHWEST SIDE *Fairfield*

## NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION

Fairfield is a low population density neighborhood. The residential area is in the southwestern section where a mix of early to mid-20th century housing stock dominates, including Tudor, Cape Cod, and other styles. The Berryland housing development occupies a large portion of the residential area with many blocks of multi-unit structures. Industrial/commercial buildings, storage areas, and open lands comprise most of the remainder of Fairfield. There is a business corridor on North Teutonia Avenue, including the large Silver Mill Court Shopping Center.

Fairfield is flat with modest hills throughout the neighborhood. The only public green space besides open lots is Berryland Playground. See neighborhood photos below.

## HISTORY

Over 50 neighborhoods on Milwaukee's northwest side once comprised the unincorporated Town of Granville in Milwaukee County, which extended from Hampton Avenue on the south to County Line Road on the north, and 27th Street on the east to 124th Street on the west. Today's Fairfield was once within the Town of Granville. The neighborhood was named after one of its streets, Fairfield Court, which was constructed as part of Zingan and Braun's Fairfield Subdivision in the late 1920s. "Fairfield" is a word traditionally used to describe a pleasant, open space.

### Early populations

In the middle of the nineteenth century, a Menomonee Indian village or encampment was identified near the area that would become Fairfield. This was also the time that the first Europeans appeared in the wider Granville region—many of whom would have relationships with the indigenous settlers (see quotes below from *The Golden Years of Yesteryear* by Emily Treichel Boehlke below).

According to the *Milwaukee Sentinel* (March 22, 1877) there were originally three small European settlements in the Granville area. The first, in 1835, was the family of Jacob Brazelton which included 11 sons. The second was duo Daniel R. Small and W.P. Woodward from Indiana who pitched their tents in the center of the Granville area shortly after the Brazelton family arrived and later built homes. The third group of settlers, the Joseph R. Thomas family and S.C. Enos, arrived shortly after Small and Woodward.

Within a few years a new group arrived from the town of Granville in Washington County, New York. The assemblage included the Evert, Brown, Lake, Dutcher, and Norton families. They gave their new home the name of their former home in New York.

But it was not these earliest settlers that established much of the culture of Granville Township. That role belonged to a wave of Pennsylvania "Dutch" (actually Germans) who arrived just a few years later from Telford, Pennsylvania, including the Wambold, Leister, Scholl, Barndt,



Today's neighborhood—  
Residences on N. 40th St.  
& W. Kaul Ave. looking east

Price, Bergstresser, Borse, Klein, Martin, Huber, Groll, Horning, and Lewis families. The Pennsylvania Dutch, under the leadership of Samuel Wambold, quickly established the German Evangelical Lutheran and Reformed Church (now known as Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church) in 1847. The following year, the church's pastor, Wilhelm Wrede, called a meeting of local Lutheran ministers at the church. This group would later become the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. A museum of these early synod activities now stands west of the Fairfield neighborhood on 107th Street.

In the 1840s there were over 200 people living in Granville Township, and the numbers continued to grow. A small Irish community settled on Granville's eastern border near the Fairfield area. Some Irish settlements extended to the center of the township. Initially they set up tents, built brush shanties, and log cabins. But during these early years, Granville Township remained strongly German, and more Germans arrived every year.

### *Germans and more Germans*

In the early years of the 20th century a very different German community arrived to the Granville area. These were the German Russians who had left Germany for Russia in the late 1700s and settled along the Volga River. For about 150 years they had been allowed to keep their own language and traditions. But later Russification policies, and ultimately the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, resulted in collective departure of many from the area. Some ended up in Granville Township (many more settled in the U.S. Plains States).

Between 1910 and 1920 the German Russians set up their own colony where most built farms south of Villard and east of the railroad tracks. They organized Grace Lutheran Church at 34th Street near Villard south of today's Fairfield neighborhood. The group remained relatively isolated from their neighbors—both through choice and external prejudice. After the 1917 revolution and growing Communist paranoia in America, Milwaukeeans began calling the German Russian colony "Red Town" even though most of the Germans loathed Communism.

### *Fairfield specifics*

During the 1920s, real estate developers were investing in the area that would become the Fairfield neighborhood of Milwaukee. Zingan and Braun's Fairfield Subdivision was constructed surrounding the street of Fairfield Court. Another real estate business headed by an Arthur Wenz was beginning development along an untitled road that intersected with Teutonia—Teutonia being known as Cedarburg Road at the time. Wenz encountered a nearby farmer with a greenhouse whose enterprise inspired Wenz to name the street.

See a profile of the farmer's family below.

## **Fairfield resident profile**

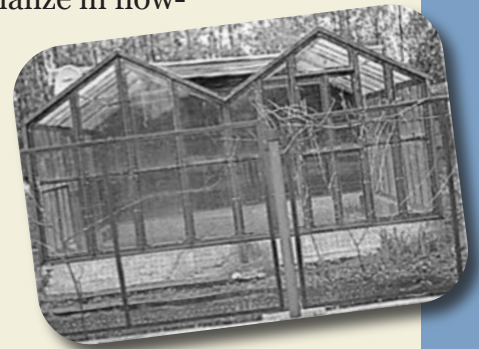
*Additional information was found in U.S. Census and other public records.*

### **The Mankes**

Sometime before 1900, August and Meta Manke purchased land near Cedarburg Road (now Teutonia) at the southeastern corner of today's Fairfield neighborhood—then in the Town of Granville. Both August and Meta had emigrated from Germany—August in 1882 and Meta in 1883—the year the couple married. They built a farm on the land and eventually had four children, possibly more.

After years of general farming, the Mankes began to specialize in flowers. They built a greenhouse<sup>i</sup> on their land. By the late 1920s, the floral business was run by son Fredrick, his wife Emma (nee Denzin), and their seven children.

During these years a local real estate man, Arthur Wenz, was beginning to develop the lane that intersected with the Cedarburg Road, where the Manke farm was located. But the lane had no name. Wenz decided to call it Florist Avenue after the Manke greenhouse farm. That designation stands today.



### *Movement toward annexation*

Economic prosperity reigned in Granville, due partially to the work ethic of the early German farmers. The town remained predominantly rural through the early half of the 20th century. From the late 1800s to World War II, Granville was an important center for dairy and truck farming. Resident William Schlapmann owned a creamery that produced 100 pounds a week. Gradually industries began to open in Granville and the area eventually became the most concentrated base of industrial employment in Wisconsin—today including industrial parks and scores of companies.

In 1956, the residents and property owners of Granville were given a choice to consolidate with the City of Milwaukee. Needing services that Milwaukee could offer—especially water--the majority of voters said yes to the referendum. By the 1960s, the western portion of Granville (16.5 square miles) was annexed by Milwaukee and parts of the eastern section consolidated as the Village of Brown Deer. Milwaukee became one of the few large cities in the United States that still had working farms within its boundaries.

The following is a sample of a few businesses that were incorporated into Milwaukee in the Fairfield area at the time of annexation on North Teutonia between West Florist and West Green Tree. See summary points below.

<i>Addresses on N. Teutonia in 1961</i>	<i>Businesses and organizations from <u>Milwaukee City Directory</u></i>
6087	(Clement) Manke Greenhouse
6241	Greenwood Carnation Florist Company
6242	Weber's Teutonia Gardens Florist
6263	Quality Oil Products Company Delta Oil Products Company Atko Company
6301	Cities Service Oil Company
6333	Shellenberger Gregg Fuel Company

<i>Addresses on N. Teutonia in 1961</i>	<i>Businesses and organizations from <u>Milwaukee City Directory</u></i>
6373	Lakeside Oil Company Inc.
6377	Commerce Industrial Chemicals Inc.
6450	North Star Van & Storage Inc. Badger Kitchen Distributors Home Remodeling Unlimited
6464	Erwin Meat Company
6555	Perma-Floor Covering and Ceramics Inc.
6618	Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother Convent
6643	Gielow's Lawn & Garden Equipment
6651	House of Furniture
6667	Toepfer & Sons Iron and Steel Work
6720	Hennecke Company Steel Fabricator Bridge Division
6737	F. Rosenberg Elevator Company Inc.
6751	Coronet Printing

### Summary notes from the U.S. Census and other public sources

- Technically, only those businesses and organizations on the west side of Teutonia (odd numbers) were within the Fairfield neighborhood, but residents could easily access shops on either side of the street.
- This stretch of Teutonia has an unusual combination of enterprises, with 4 focused on gardening, 10 industrial/chemical industries, and a convent.
- The Manke's floral business was still operating in the 1960s. Three households on the family tract of land were headed by Mankes in 1961—Clement, Fred, and Mrs. Clara Manke.
- Shellenberger Gregg Fuel Company is still operating on Teutonia today.
- Lakeside Oil Company is still operating, but not on Teutonia.
- The Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother is today Gray's Conference Center and Sanctuary.
- Arthur Gielow was involved in the novelty business before hanging his shingle at the Teutonia business.
- Toepfer & Sons Iron Works has a historic marker in the Third Ward where the industry had a warehouse. Wenzel Toepfer was a major leader in inventing machinery for malting and brewing production.

## Arrival of African Americans

More change was coming to Fairfield and the former Granville area. African Americans began to migrate in for two reasons: (1) available industrial jobs, and (2) the need for housing following the leveling of their former central city home known as Bronzeville (see [Halyard Park neighborhood](#) for details). As in most Milwaukee neighborhoods where the dominant population was German, integration proceeded without incident. Many African American families were now finding their way into the middle class.

Unfortunately, the deindustrialization movement that began in the 1980s reversed this course. Manufacturing employment in Milwaukee fell 77 percent, from a peak in 1963 to the present. What had been a working-and middle-class area on the Northwest Side was in decline.

## Current populations (as of 2021)

Today, most of the Germans have left Fairfield. Nearly 9 in 10 of the 2,300+ residents of the neighborhood are African Americans. The rest are mainly European Americans, with just under 200 claiming German ancestry. There is also a scattering of Latinos (about evenly divided between those of Puerto Rican and those of Mexican ancestry), Asians (nearly all of Hmong or Thai descent), American Indians, Jamaicans, West Indians, and residents of mixed racial background in the area.

The median household income for Fairfield is approximately \$27,000, placing the neighborhood in the lower middle-income stratum. The largest number of occupations claimed by Fairfield's adult residents are in the fields of administration, healthcare support, and transportation. There are also a number of working farms in the Fairfield area. There are over five times the number of adults claiming farming as their means of income than their proportions in other Milwaukee areas.

## RECURRING NEARBY OUTINGS (Health conditions permitting)

In the following section the website addresses have been eliminated due to technical problems with the various ways different web browsers display PDF files. Website information on these events is available through the book *Milwaukee Area Outings on the Cheap*. See below.

SLEDDING--MCGOVERN			
When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Winter, daytime	McGovern Park, 5400 N. 51st St.	Sledding hills for family and friends.	Free

GRANVILLE BID CAR, TRUCK, AND BIKE SPECTACULAR			
When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late Sep., Sun. 10am-3pm	Russ Darrow, 7676 N. 76th St.	Exhibition of iconic custom vehicles.	Free

These outings are provided courtesy of MECAH Publishing.



## QUOTES FROM RESIDENTS

**In *The Golden Years of Yesteryear* by Emily Treichel Boehlke (reprinted in *A History of Granville* by Miriam Y. Bird, 1996), Treichel Boehlke writes about her family's history in Granville from the mid-1800s through the late 20th century. The following are passages from this work.**

"When my Grandparents Treichel were first married and lived in their one room cabin, the Indians would stop in and admire their baby. . . At Grandfather Hackbarth's the Indians set up camps in the woods every spring and fall when they came to do their trading in Milwaukee."

"Weddings in the 1860s and later were quite different from today. The invitations were hand written by the bride and groom and they were the hosts, not the parents of the bride. . . the silk material for the brides' dresses was only 18 inches wide, so for a fancy dress, it took 18 to 20 yards of material. It was not unusual for a man to wear his wedding suit 20 to 25 years, or as long as it fitted."

". . . the settlers were having church services at the home of Ernest Zautcke, who had brought a reed organ from Germany to help him with his singing. One of the men could read a text from the Bible and the other religious books which they had brought from across. Mr. Zautcke then donated land for a church and school on the corner of [today's] Hopkins and Silver Spring Roads. They were served by visiting pastors from Milwaukee and vicinity."

"School [of her parents] was then held at the house of one of the member's house one month and at another one the next month, whoever had a room big enough to seat the children."

"The housewife had to plan well ahead for her household. There was the Arab that would come about once a month with two heavy suitcases full of notions and yard goods for house dresses. When he begged for a night's lodging the housewife would get a spool of thread for payment. Also a man with a big basket of oranges and bananas would come. Bananas were 25 cents a dozen for nice large ones. Later a baker would come once a week with bread and sweets."

"Every mother had to be well-schooled in home remedies. . . Plants and herbs were gathered in the summer to be dried and stored for the winter, to be used for any and all ailments."

"Grandfather would sit and knit many mittens and stockings for all the grandchildren while Grandma read to him and tended her many plants of which she had quite a variety."

"Even the first street cars were propelled by horse power. There were only 2 lines, one on 3rd Street to Williamsburg, a section of the city at North Avenue and Center and [one] further north (an all-German settlement)."

"In the beginning of the 1900s, there was no Silver Spring Drive, not even a wagon trail west of Hopkins Street. But the plans were made to have a road there, so one of the farmers would ride through the woods with horse and wagon or on horseback as best he could, so it would be legally kept as a driveway to the next mile west."

“During the first World War, all gathering of people was forbidden, due to the spreading of the flu. So at Freistadt Church only every other pew could be sat in, so all the people east of the church came for early services and all those west of the church came for later service. Also all talking and preaching was to be done in English, but Pastor Wehrs insisted on preaching in German as many of his older members could not understand English.”

“There were about 12 to 14 neighbors that exchanged labor. This was a hard job for the ladies also, with breakfast at 6, lunch at 9, dinner at 12, another lunch at 3, and supper at sundown. No 8 hour days.”

“When the first threshing machine came out the farmers started to raise barley for the Breweries in Milwaukee. My father raised quite a lot of it and we girls had to man the farming mill in the evening when milking was done and our lessons were finished. This was a cold and tiresome job until enough was cleared for a load to be hauled to town the next day.

### **Quotes from an oral history of the Granville neighborhoods currently being conducted by Urban Anthropology Inc.<sup>ii</sup>—About THEN.**

“At the time we lived with my grandmother on the original homestead. And that was in the area of Fond du lac Avenue and Silver Spring just northwest of the intersection of Fond du Lac and Silver Spring Drive. I know I’ve mentioned to you that I had some old maps and plaque books and things like that and that does show my ancestors’ names listed on them back there. Owning 30--they owned 40 acres total--in two different parcels in that area. Anyway, we lived in that original farmhouse there and I remember a little bit about it. There were some older buildings. Some had been torn down and there was a fairly large field behind the house. And I also recall vaguely, that it did not have any indoor plumbing at the time.”

“This would have been in the 60s. A lot of us walked to McGovern Park from the neighborhood and took our families there. The park had gorgeous weeping willows around a wide pond. It was a place that attracted painters.”

“Oh, [there were] tons of restaurants. When we actually lived there, I was going to UW-M. Northridge was *the* place you go to. Northridge was the mall in 1980 that you wanted to go to. Every cool store was there. Better than Southridge, better than Mayfair, better than Brookfield square. I lived in Tosa like off of 72nd and North. Equal distance between all the shopping centers and I went to Northridge. That was where you went after work when you were like in the early 80s--that’s where you went to go meet guys. Northridge was where it’s at. That was *the* place to be. You know you made it when you could afford an apartment in the area.”

### **Quotes from the oral history of the Granville neighborhoods—About NOW**

“Everyone knows that [Jesse Anderson] story. That was kinda the clincher that flipped the area. And that’s when everyone started leaving. And I think what had happened during the eighties it was still kinda bustling. One of the keys there, Northridge was put there because there was supposed to be a freeway that ran right by it on 68th Street going north. The Park West Freeway was supposed to come up 68th Street. I think it was doomed to fail because that freeway never went in. Malls need freeways so that people could get to it. So that was one of the keys to the area that never happened. I

think the 2nd key to the area was that a lot of the housing around there was what I called transitional housing. You didn't come there to live; you came there to live before you moved and bought a house somewhere. So, there was a lot of apartments and there was a lot of duplexes and a lot of places where people lived there until you got your house. And so, it kinda developed that kind of image. And so what happened then is that the mall started becoming a place for young people to hang out. They had the movie theatres and the TJ Fridays. All these places all over. And because I think the young people [were] hanging out there, the crime started to increase over there. Lots of shoplifting. And so, what happened, I think [the] suburban woman shopper was afraid to go there. So, they would go to Mayfair or Bayshore. You started seeing that effect up there. And some of the crime was more perceived than actual. But, nevertheless perception was reality up there. The city--back in the 60s and 70s--they created some of the low - cost housing and they wanted it out of downtown. They moved the woodland up on 44 Brown Deer Road. And so that ended up being affordable housing for people. And so that ended up being a pocket where there was crime for a while there. It was becoming a rougher neighborhood. So, over the course of all these things that are happening. Then all of a sudden Jesse Anderson happened. And that cinched it where everyone became convinced. So, it took the Granville area and any retail future that it had . . . It went from this boomtown in the 70s by the time it hit the mid-90s it became full circle."

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<sup>ii</sup> Urban Anthropology Inc. complies with human subjects requirements of formal research and asks informants to sign informed consent forms that stipulate anonymity, hence names are not provided with the quotes.



Today's neighborhood-Houses on N. 35th St. & W. Florist Ave.



Todays neighborhood-  
Industrial buildings on N. 40th St.  
& W. Douglas Ave.



Todays neighborhood-Residences on  
N. 40th St. & W. Kaul Ave. looking west

Todays neighborhood-  
Residences on N. 40th St.  
& W. Kaul Ave. looking east





Today's neighborhood-Area north of the Silver Mill Court shopping center



Today's neighborhood-Silver Mill Court shopping center





Today's neighborhood-Berryland housing development on N. 42nd St.

For more information on the history of Granville, refer to Miriam Y. Bird's *A History of Granville Township*.

For more information on Milwaukee neighborhoods, refer to John Gurda's *Milwaukee, City of Neighborhoods* and Jill Florence Lackey's and Rick Petrie's *Germans in Milwaukee: A neighborhood history*.

Do you have great photos of this neighborhood? Are you a resident with an interesting quote about this neighborhood? Do you have recurring outings, additions, corrections, or general comments about this neighborhood? Please email your input to:  
JFLanthropologist@sbcglobal.net

<sup>i</sup> Photo attribution: general photo of greenhouse in early 20th century at  
<http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-Cx-KDtSew1I/Tc1eQksYZ6I/AAAAAAAAAQw/UmcMPWHZEoU/s1600/greenhouses2.jpg>