

Approximate boundaries:
N-W. Greenfield Ave; S-W. Becher St;
E-S. 5th St; W-S. 16th St

SOUTH SIDE *Historic Mitchell Street*

NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION

Historic Mitchell Street is a densely populated area that has mainly one- and two-story wood frame houses. The main business district is along Mitchell Street. While Polish flats are not as numerous in this neighborhood as they are further south, some can be found. When the Poles arrived they purchased narrow lots for cottages. As their families grew it was hard to add rooms because the lots were too narrow. They lifted the foundations, added cement blocks or bricks, and created semi-basement levels that became new dwellings.

Historic Mitchell is also a neighborhood of churches. Per square mile, Historic Mitchell Street has more than 10 times as many religious organizations than the average for Wisconsin.

HISTORY

The Historic Mitchell Street neighborhood once occupied a northern section of an area known as the Old (or Historic) South Side, an area encompassing today's Kinnickinnic Avenue to 27th Street and Greenfield to Oklahoma, that was originally developed by Polish immigrants.

Early populations

Polish immigration to America resulted from a combination of push-pull factors. Between 1795 and 1918, Poland was partitioned by Austria, Russia and Prussia. In the 1870s Prussian leader Bismarck initiated a Germanization policy in the western section of Poland designed to bar speaking of languages other than German, impose a draft for the German army, weaken the Catholic Church, and replace Polish landowners with German citizens. This policy, coupled with the sharp drop in grain prices in the 1880s, led to massive emigrations of people from Poland in the late 19th century.

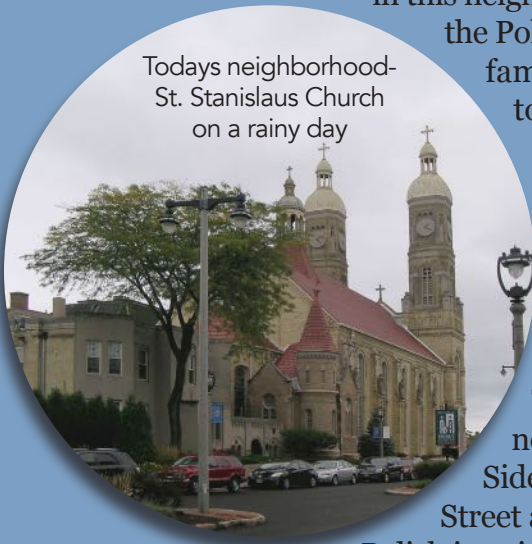
Many economically-devastated Poles came to urban areas in America's Midwest where they could access entry-level jobs in industry. The settlement areas became known as Polonias, or Polish-American communities. Polonias tended to be self-sustaining neighborhoods with intricate parish systems and a wealth of Polish institutions. One of these Polonias developed on Milwaukee's South Side, a part of which is now known as Historic Mitchell.

The Polish language was preserved in the neighborhood well into the 1930s. Some of the strongest assets in the mainly Polish neighborhood were the self-help institutions—the fraternal, relief organizations for the homeland, and arts and cultural organizations.

Mitchell Street uniqueness

Yes, Mitchell Street was part of the Polonia. Churches and Polish culture were as important in the Mitchell Street area as they were in other Old South Side neighborhoods. Most notably was St. Stanislaus, founded in 1866 as the first Polish church built in America (and erected on today's 5th and Mitchell in 1872). The Polish churches were more than places of worship; they

Today's neighborhood-
St. Stanislaus Church
on a rainy day



were also centers of cultural life. While the area that is today's Historic Mitchell Street neighborhood was dominated by Poles, the neighborhood also hosted a fair number of other ethnicities in the early part of the 20th century, and many more in the latter half.

The early ethnic arrivals included Slovaks, Lithuanians, Slovenians, Bohemians, Dutch, Hungarians, and a sprinkling of Asians and Jews. There were enough Germans to justify the founding of two of their congregations on Mitchell—St. Anthony Catholic and St. Jacobi Lutheran.

Some of the residents rose to greatness in their fields. See their profiles below.

Historic Mitchell resident profile (early 20th century)

(Information from U.S. Census and other public records)

Aloisius Szymanski (a.k.a. Al Simmons)

The son of Polish immigrants, Aloisius (“Al”) Szymanski (see photo¹) grew up in the Historic Mitchell Street neighborhood. His family home throughout his life was at 1972 South 15th Place (previously American Avenue). Born in 1903, he was probably a fan of the sandlot darlings of the Old South Side, the Kosciuszko Reds. The Reds operated between 1909 and 1919 and drew thousands to their games. They won four championships

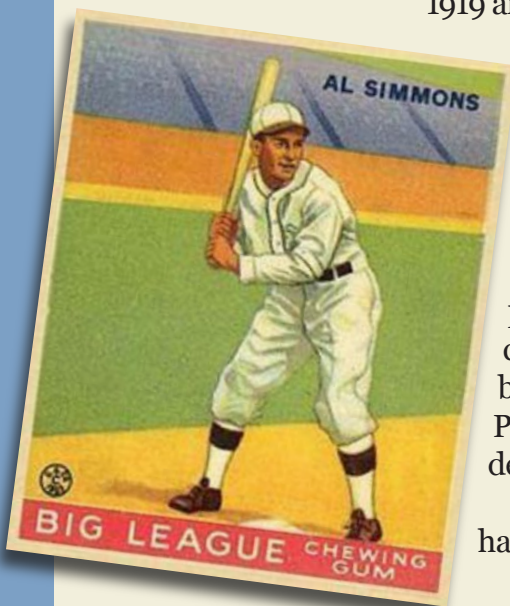
during their decade in the City and Lake Shore Leagues. In the 4th grade, Al was spanked by his father because he insisted that he wanted to grow up to be a professional baseball player. His father eventually yielded, telling him he'd better become a great player. Aloisius Szymanski complied.

Al perfected his hitting skills and was signed to a contract in the minor leagues. When he found people having difficulty pronouncing his last name he modified it to Simmons. He was called up to the Philadelphia Athletics in 1954 and very quickly became a star. Simmons led the A's to the American League Pennant in 1929-- followed by the World Series, where the A's defeated the Chicago Cubs.

Simmons married Doris Lynn Reader in 1934. The couple had one child.

Playing for the Athletics, Braves, White Sox, Tigers, Reds, and Senators throughout his career, Simmons remained a star. He completed his playing days with a phenomenal lifetime batting average of .334, became the American League batting champion twice, and was inducted into the Major League Hall of Fame in 1953.

Throughout his life Milwaukee remained Al's home. Working as a coach after his playing days had ended, he returned to Milwaukee following a heart attack. Three years later, in 1956, he died in his hometown at age 53. He was interred at St. Adalbert's Cemetery.



Historic Mitchell resident profile (1960s)

(Information from U.S. Census and other public records)

Lorine Niedecker

Jonathan Williams, director of the Jargon Society, once wrote that “Lorine Niedecker is the most absolute poetess since Emily Dickinson.” While she made her home on Black Hawk Island in Wisconsin, in 1963 she met and married Albert Millen of the Historic Mitchell Street neighborhood, an industrial painter at Ladish Drop Forge. Lorine moved into the neighborhood. The couple first moved to a flat at 2042 South 6th Street and later to 539 West Maple. The couple stayed in the city during the week and headed for Black Hawk Island on weekends.

Niedecker met Millen on Black Hawk Island when Millen knocked at her door inquiring about a nearby cottage. The couple found they shared interests in the natural environment and married that year. Niedecker didn’t even tell him she was a poet (or a nationally acclaimed one) until they were married.

During her Milwaukee years she wrote poetry on the neighborhood that mentioned the various landmarks, including the Basilica of St. Josaphat. Her books published after her move to the Old South Side included *T & G: The Collected Poems, 1936–1966, North Central, and My Life By Water*.

Niedecker was the subject of a 2011 biography, *Lorine Niedecker: A Poet’s Life*, by Margot Peters. While researching the book, Peters visited the home on South 6th where Niedecker had once lived in the Historic Mitchell Street neighborhood in order to capture the ambience of the poet’s Milwaukee years. A plaque was affixed to the house in 2017 to honor its one-time tenant.

Commercial life in the Historic Mitchell Street neighborhood

The commercial corridor on Mitchell Street at one time was considered the neighborhood’s “downtown” and tagged “the Polish Grand Avenue.” But looking at the businesses that lined Mitchell Street during sample years of 1930 and 1952, it is quite clear that other ethnics found their niche in Old South Side commerce (see summary notes below charts).

Mitchell Street businesses and organizations

1930

Mitchell Street between today’s 4th & 17th Streets. Note that the addresses below would change in 1932. Generally speaking, they would be advanced by 2-6 blocks.

<i>Address on W. Mitchell St.</i>	<i>Name of business or organization from the Milwaukee City Directory</i>
301	Frank Plaszynski Soft Drinks
346	Kasimer Karasinski Shoe Repair
348	Mathew Nickels Confectionary
350	Dollar Cleaning & Dying Co.

<i>Address on W. Mitchell St.</i>	<i>Name of business or organization from the Milwaukee City Directory</i>
352	Herman Rotter Tires
362	Casimer Dropp Meats
363	Danielski & Co. Tire
356	Mitchell Beauty Shoppe
369	Danielski Co. Filling Station
374	Bowlers News & Amateur Sports Publishing Company
"	Bowlers News & Amateur Sports Weekly
376	United Auto Supply Co.
377	Frank J. Ponrek? Barber
389	Paul Noe's Meat Market
391	Stanley Huras Musical Merchandise
"	Norman Noe Dentist
393	Richard G. Wolfferdorff Baker
395	Paul Shopik Barber
397	Hanover Cleaners & Dyers
401	Martin Czerwinski Undertaker
"	Walter Bucholz Auto Livery
403-05	Cut Rate Furniture Store
407	John Winski Restaurant
"	Walter Najder Musical Teacher
"	Felix Jaknbowski Musical Teacher
408	Sisters of Notre Dame
409	Grand Studio Photographers
410	Roman Werner Undertaker
412	Steph K. Iwinski Soft Drinks
412 1/2	South End Furniture Co.
413	Eagle Tea Co. Grocer
415	International Dye Works
416	Kryzinski Brothers Picture Frames
417-19	Polonia Credit Company Clothing
418	A&P Tea Company Grocer

<i>Address on W. Mitchell St.</i>	<i>Name of business or organization from the Milwaukee City Directory</i>
“	Edward R. Schubert Undertaker
420	Krygiers Drug Store Inc.
421	Anton’s Hat & Shirt Shop
422	Samson’s Radio Stores Inc.
423	Helwig’s Floral Shoppe
425	Henry Pritz Cigars
427	Juneau Building & Theater
200-1	Byron O. Nobles Physician
202	Peter S. Brzonkala Lawyer
204	Charles N. Peterson
205	Joseph Dries Physician
206	Stanley Shanberge Dentist
206	Wilson & Co. Wholesale Meats
207-9	Kleczka & Steinhilber Lawyers
215	Juneau Investment Co.
217	John W. Strother Mtr.? Agents
“	Eureka Vacuum Cleaner Co.
218	Jack Pinsel Food Specialist
219-20	Henry Pinsel Manufacturers Agent
300-02	Milwaukee General Construction Co.
304	Visiting Nurse Association
306	Wasico & Wasico Chiropractors
308-11	Family Welfare Accociation
316-17	Polish Young People’s Alliance Library
428	John N. Weber Shoe Shiner
429	Juneau Lunch
430	Walter Janik Restaurant
431	Badger Paint & Hardware Store
432	Edward A. Smukowski Men’s Furnishings
433	English Woolen Mills Tailors
434	Joseph F. Cvejdik Barber
437	Edward Rutzen Malt Products

Address on W. Mitchell St.	Name of business or organization from the Milwaukee City Directory
438	Handy (or Hardy) Fruit Market
441	Peter F. Piasecki Jr. Victrolas
442	Industrial Loan Co. of Milwaukee
“	Arthur Rich Dentist
“	Alex J. Maliszewski Dentist
“	Ann’s Beauty Shoppe
443	Joseph Helminiak Confectionary
444-6	A Przbyla Real Estate
“	State Building & Loan Association
447	Philip H. Surlow Men’s Furnishings
448-50	Central State Bank Building
“	Bernard J. Adamkiewicz Lawyer
“	Joseph J. Adamkiewicz Physician
“	Sergius A. Hartman Physician
“	Pacholski & Doligalaski General Contractors
“	Francis Gurda Architect
449	National Tailoring Co.
“	Rudolph Westnofen Physician
451	Ignatz Czerwinski Real Estate
“	Edmund J. Czerwinski Lawyer
“	Alliance Building & Loan Association
“	Kilbourn Holding Co.
“	Polonia Investment Co.
“	Polish Association of America
452-64	Kunzelman-Esser Co. Furniture
453-55	Wile Brothers Clothing
“	Edmund E. Majchrzak Dentist
457	J&R Motor Supply Co.
463	New York Coffee Pot Restaurant
465	Nowak Sewing Machine Co.
468	Frank Kullmann Baker

Address on W. Mitchell St.	Name of business or organization from the Milwaukee City Directory
“	Liberty Studio Photographer
469-71	Prokop Furniture Co.
470	Krenz Electric Co.
“	Frank K. Pollon Optometrist
471	Park Theater
472	Lawrence Gezella Sausages
473	Heller Brothers Groceries
“	Mitchell Inn Restaurant
476	Big Six Bowling Alleys
“	Joseph Muszynski Soft Drinks
478	National Tea Co.
“	Harry N. Rosenberg Optometrist
“	Roman Paradowski Dentist
480	Mitchell's Clothing Inc.
“	Stanley A. Baranowski Physician
481	Richard's Clothes
482-84	Stumpf's Inc.
483-85	Schublat's Food Market
“	Joseph A. Rozewski's Grocery
“	Ralph Kramer Fruits
484	Fred E. Mueller Real Estate
“	Walter H. Kleinschmidt Dentist
487	National Credit Clothing Co.
“	National Waving System
488	Edward H. Motl Jewelers
“	Stanley Choinski Tailor
“	William P. Glisch Physician
“	Blazius Krygier Dentist
489	Anton E. Martynski Leather Goods
490	Arthur Graves Baker
491	Noerenberg's Inc. Aprons

<i>Address on W. Mitchell St.</i>	<i>Name of business or organization from the Milwaukee City Directory</i>
492	Herman A. Kupper Jeweler
493	J.M. Schneider & Son Real Estate Co.
"	Schneider Holding Co.
"	South Side Mutual Building & Loan Association
494	Alf D. Barnett Men's Furnishings
495	Albert Dziedzic Shoes
"	Daniel O'Connell Physician
496	Charles Schudson Men's Furnishings Inc.
498	Sweater & Hosiery Shop (owned by Wong? who lives in rear)
499	Kasimer Borzych Meats
501	Julian Kuderski Furrier
504	Economy Chain Store Auto Supplies
"	William C. Abely Dentist
506	Dixie Shoe Stores
507	Mitchell Street Fruit Market
"	Thaddeus Pruss Lawyer
508	Laton's Clothes
509	Mock's Pharmacy
510	Joseph Goldman's Jewelers Inc.
"	Jacob B. Bernstein Optometrist
"	Louis A. Bernhardt Physician
512-24	Hill's Dry Goods
"	David Wald Optometrist
"	Raymond Keller Grocery
"	Stanley Huras Musical Merchandise
"	Harry Chudacoff Confectioner
526-40	A Goldman & Sons Department store
"	Mode Millenary Co.
"	E.I. Leibow Women's Furnishings
"	A Fogelson Co. Rugs

<i>Address on W. Mitchell St.</i>	<i>Name of business or organization from the Milwaukee City Directory</i>
“	Edward Newman Shoes
“	Warren Brothers Leather
“	Esson Clothing Co.
“	L. Wiemann Crockery Co.
“	John J. Masiakowski Electrical Supplies
531-33	Fons & Co. Real Estate
“	National Savings & Loan Association
“	Stanley L. Krysko Physician
“	Walter P. Zymalony Physician
“	Alvin J. Brown Dentist
“	Thaddeus B. Sytkowski Chiropractor
“	James Kerzin Optometrist
535	John S. Strozyk Real Estate
“	Sobieski Building & Loan Association
“	World Travel Service
“	Milwaukee Health Department, South Side Station
539	First Wisconsin National Bank Building
200	Frank J. Schubert Physician
201	Jack A. Wallensak Dentist
202	Edwin M. Blumenthal Dentist
203	John S. Inda Real Estate
204-5	Casimir Conski Lawyer
542-4	F. W. Woolworth & Co.
“	Bloch-Daneman Home Furniture Co.
546	National Family Clothing Stores Inc.
547-9	Unger Clothing Co
548-50	L. Wiemann Notions Co.
551	Robert’s Women’s Wear
“	John N. Landberg Lawyer
“	Joseph J. Jankowski Optometrist
552-70	Ed Schuster’s & Company Department Store, inc.

Address on W. Mitchell St.	Name of business or organization from the Milwaukee City Directory
553	Krieger Son & Co. Clothing
“	Walter E. Meyer Signs
“	Augustine M. Rowan Dentist
557	Buehler Brothers Meats
559	Barnett's Millinery
“	Grigg-Horton Shoe Co.
“	Theodor Zielinski
561	Wile Hat Millinery Co.
“	Miracle Frocks
563	Joseph Zawodny Tailor
“	Roman Kotecki Billiards
565	Waler's Fashion Shop
569	Mitchell St. Bank Building
	1 Charles F. Springob Dentist
	2 Anthony A. Stemper Dentist
	3-4 John A. Mietus Dentist
	5-6 Frank W. Arnold Physician
	7 Vacant
	8-9 George H. Belding Dentist
571-77	The Grand Women's Furnishings
“	The Benjamin Rosenberg Women's Furnishings Co.
572	Walgreen's Drugs
578	The Big Shoe Store
579	Linnick Rugs Inc.
582	Rin Murakami Chiropractor
“	South Side Mineral Fume Baths
582-84	Skowron's Women's Store
“	William Gutbrod Milliner
583	The Fair (china shop)
“	Jaros F. Zivnuska Physician
587-89	Granada Theater

Address on W. Mitchell St.	Name of business or organization from the Milwaukee City Directory
588	Singer Sewing Machine Co.
590	Paradise Shoe Store
591	Bartkowiak & Koss Real Estate
592	Fanny Farmer Candy Shop
“	Hackett Hoff & Thiermann Real Estate Inc
“	Metropolitan Life Insurance
“	American Loan Co.
“	Raymond A. Dempsey Dentist
593	G.R. Kinney Shoes Inc.
594	Jacob Kaska Jeweler
595-99	Waldheim & Co. Furnishings Inc.
596	Modjeska Theatre
“	Bonnie Frocks
598	Modjeska Tog Shop Men’s Furnishings
600	Harnman Furniture & Carpet Co.
601	Vacant
603	Viola Beauty Shoppe
604	Mrs. Alvina Moots Drugs
“	P.O. Substation
605	White Tower Restaurant Inc.
606	Nan King Café
607-09	Froeming Brothers Florists
“	Modjeska Flower Shop
608	Paulsen Shoe Co.
610	National Tea Co.
611	Butterfly Sweet Shop
612	E.G. Shinner Co. Meats
“	Tugenberg’s Women’s Ready-to-Wear
“	Mrs. Josephine Bogiel Midwife
613	Mitchell Street Fur Shop

<i>Address on W. Mitchell St.</i>	<i>Name of business or organization from the Milwaukee City Directory</i>
613	Butter Building
201-2	Frank A. Michalski Dentist
"	Orrin H. Lentzner Dentist
203	John Sander Lawyer
204	August G. Wolff Architect
205	Concordia Building & Loan Association
"	Henry C. Roethlisberger Real Estate
207	Paul H. Knolk Lumber
208	Otto Wolfgram Physician
209	Vacant
211	Prudential Insurance Company of America
212	Edmund A. Brzezinski Physician
214	Joseph E. Smelts Chiropractor
215	Eugene J. Pawinski Dentist
614-16	Wisconsin Dye Works
615	JJ Ripple Shoe Co.
617	Great Lakes Radio Corp
"	Nowiny Polskie Daily Newspaper
619	Alois Lohberger Baker
621-23	Harry Schuster Fruits
624	J.E. Krasno & Co. Dry Goods
"	Post Stores Dry Goods
"	Leon A. Nowak Dentist
626	A.Kanter & Co. Dry Goods
630	Roloff's Recreation Parlor
"	Edward O. Schweister Barber
632	Nabor hood (Neighborhood?) Paint Store
634	D & F Marchet Meats Co.
636	A&P Tea Co. Groceries
638	Luke's Furniture
641	Tezlaff Co.

<i>Address on W. Mitchell St.</i>	<i>Name of business or organization from the Milwaukee City Directory</i>
647	Market Lunch
649	Sun Fang Laundry
658	Thomas Anderson Soft Drinks
661	Motive Parts Co. of America Inc.
663-65	The Knuth Motorcycle Co.
668	Jacob Waxman Grocery
"	Albert J. Peksa Printer
671	Bob's Battery Shop
673	Walter M. Blasinski Chiropodist
683	Western Tire & Rubber Co.
684	Joseph Kitak Soft Drinks
685	Stanley Kroll Shoe Repair
687	Emil J. Eckert Barber
691-95	Mitchell Street Motor Sales
698	Mrs. Lillian Graczyk Baker
700	Rose Cleaners & Dyers
710	Alphonse A. Kaminski Dentist
"	Frank S. Rybak Physician
"	Edward M. Lassa Drugs
"	PO Station #7
711	Edward Pokrop Soft Drinks
713	Felix Kuskowski Soft Drinks
714	Cozy Beauty Shop
723-25	South Side Bird Store
724	Joseph Bellack's Music House
727?	Dryer's Dry Cleaners
728	Stanley Wyrwicki Meats
729	Joseph Bawn Confectioner
731	Arenz Grinding Co.
732-34	T.K. Automotive Supply Co.

Address on W. Mitchell St.	Name of business or organization from the Milwaukee City Directory
“	Marie Koszewski Confectioner
733	Paul F. Felshaw Landscape Gardener

Notes from U.S. census and other public records:

- There were seven “soft drink” establishments on this stretch of Mitchell in 1930. This was during Prohibition, and some, if not many, of these shops may have been “speakeasies.”
- As in most Milwaukee neighborhoods before 1970, very few of the shopkeepers had more than 8th grade educations. Most were immigrants or children of immigrants of diverse backgrounds.
- Herman Rotter with the tire shop at 352 W. Mitchell was a Yiddish-speaking Jew from Russia. He also owned a clothing store.
- Casimer Dropp was a second generation Pole. His father, Lucas Drob, was a peddler on the south side during Casimer’s childhood. Casimer’s mother was Agnesia Szocka, also from Poland.
- Paul Noe, of 389 W. Mitchell, was one of the few shop keepers who was not an immigrant, or child of an immigrant. He was married to Bertha Gerhardt, the daughter of German immigrants. The couple was deep into their senior years when they ran the meat shop in 1930. Several of the couple’s adult sons were still living with them and also a 6-year old granddaughter. One of the sons still living with his father at age 32 was Norman Noe, the dentist next door.
- The two music teachers working and living together at 407 W. Mitchell were unhappy cases. Walter Najder came from Cook Co. IL and Felix Jaknbowski came from New Jersey. Walter’s wife Laura died before 1930 and Felix was apparently divorced from wife Josie. Both had very young children who must have been taken in by relatives before they came to Milwaukee.
- Who were the Samsons that owned the radio store? Are they members of the Harold and Rose Samson family?
- Joseph F. Cvejdik, the barber at 434 W. Mitchell, was a Slovak from Czechoslovakia. He was born in Jamoose, Bohemia and began with a cement block manufacturing shop before 1910. At that time he lived with his wife Mary and parents Frank and Katy Cvejdik. Frank (the father) worked for the City as a laborer. The Cvejdiks lived on Lapham for their entire lives (after immigrating).
- Philip H. Surlow, with the men’s clothing store at 447 W. Mitchell, was a Jewish immigrant from Hungary. He told the census taker that he spoke Spanish, English, and Yiddish. Philip and his wife Anna must have been doing pretty well with their store because in 1930 they had a maid in their household named Stella Ostrycki, a daughter of Polish immigrants from Pennsylvania. Apparently the girl did not see herself as a servant, as she told the census taker that her occupation was in the “movies.”
- Roman Kotecki, with the pool hall at 563 W. Mitchell, was the son of Polish (German sector) immigrants. The pool hall must not have done that well during the Depression, as by 1940 Roman was working as an orderly, presumably in a healthcare facility.

- Benjamin Rosenberg, with the women's clothing store at 571 W. Mitchell in the Grand complex, was a Jewish immigrant from Russia. Was he the owner of The Grand? He appeared to be very well-to-do, living in Whitefish Bay with two servants in 1930. His butler was Albert Cote, a Canadian, and Cote's wife Lillian was the maid.
- William Gutbrod, with the hat shop at 562 W. Mitchell, was the son of German immigrants. In 1930 he had at least nine children. He came from St. Louis.
- Jaros F. Zivnuska was another Bohemian immigrant from Czechoslovakia. He immigrated to the US shortly before he set up shop as a physician on Mitchell, in 1926. He and his family might have had roots in Latin America before settling in the U.S., as he was in the Canal Zone before he entered the US and took a trip to Barbados in 1935 and one to Buenos Aires, Argentina in 1939.
- The midwife, Josephine Bogiel at 612 W. Mitchell, was a Polish immigrant. She was listed as a widow in 1930, renting space on Mitchell with an adult daughter in her household.
- Nowiny Polskie, the Daily Newspaper, was actually developed through the leadership of Archbishop Messmer to be in competition with the widely distributed Kuryer Polski. The two Polish/English newspapers rivaled each other for decades.

A few Asians had a presence on Mitchell Street during this period

- Rin Murakami, of 582 W. Mitchell, was a Japanese chiropractor but also owner of the South Side Mineral Fume Baths company in his building. He was married to Isabel Pasbrig from Missouri, a woman of German extraction.
- Sun Fang, at 641 W. Mitchell, was a Chinese immigrant running the laundry and was apparently on a work visa from Taiwan.
- It is not clear if the proprietor of the sweater shop at 498 W. Mitchell was Wong or not; there were several Wongs living in the Mitchell St. area in 1930 who could have been him/her.

1952

Mitchell Street between 4th & 17th Streets

<i>Address on W. Mitchell St.</i>	<i>Name of business or organization from the <u>Milwaukee City Directory</u></i>
400	Casimir Dropp Grocery & Meats
401-07	Danielski Sporting Goods & Boats
406	Art Beauty Shop
416	Joseph J. Rozmarynowski Dentist
417	Cut Rate Smoke Shop
418	Zygmunt Jakubowski Shoes & Shoe Repair
422	Danielski & Co. Boat Display Room

Address on W. Mitchell St.	Name of business or organization from the Milwaukee City Directory
425	Frank J. Ponick Barber
427	Banner Upholstering Co.
431	National Trailer Equipment Co.
501	Hiram A. Noe Grocery & Meats
505	Huras Music & Appliance Co.
505A	Norman J. Noe Dentist
509	CEM Home Appliance Co.
515	Sadie's Floral Shop
521	Joseph A. Rozewski Confectioners—wholesale
523	Lerner's Television & Appliance Store
525	Piechowski Funeral Home
530	Sisters of Notre Dame Convent
532	Electronic Parts Corp. Television & Radio Supply
533	Joseph S. Wnukowski Tavern
534-48	McNally Plumbing & Heating Co.
535	Marlen's Bridal Shop
539	Grand Studio
541	John G. Dubis Grocery
545	International Dye Works Inc.
546	Shor's Furs
548	All-Brite Window Cleaners
549-51	Green Furniture Co.
550	John F. Chelminiak Drugs & US Post Office substation
600	Bernard A. Dziennik Hardware
601	Max B. Anton Men's Furnishings
604-06	Juneau Sweet Shop
608	Adrian B. Choinski Tavern
609	Juneau Theater
“	Juneau Investment Company

Address on W. Mitchell St.	Name of business or organization from the Milwaukee City Directory
611	Spic & Span Dry Cleaners
613	Champion Shoe Repair
615	Empire Radio & Appliance Store
616	Badger Paint Stores
620	Michalski Beer & Liquor Mart
621	Frank Gill Co. Paints
622	Robert E. Dunbar Dentist
“	Houdek & Houdek Chiropractors
“	Kleczka & Steinhilber Lawyers
624	Speigel Inc. Advertising Dept.
625	Piasecki Radio Shop
628	Mock's Pharmacy
629	Quality Candy Shoppe
632-34	Central State Bank Building
633	Northern Furniture Shop Inc.
634	American Savings & Loan Association
“	WP Celicowski & Co. Real Estate and Insurance
639	Joseph Goodman's & Son Tailors
701	Consumer's Surplus Stores General Merchandise
703	Velva Beauty Shoppe
“	Seymour E. Niggenbaum Optometrist
“	Edmund E. Majehrzak Dentist
705	Sterling Jewelers
707	Parkview Lunch
709-13	Spiegel Auto Hardware
710	Kunzelmann-Esser Co. Furniture
717	Tasty Coffee Shop
720	Kulmanus Bakery
723	Built-Rite Furniture Co.
724	Jack & Jill Goody Shop Confectioners

<i>Address on W. Mitchell St.</i>	<i>Name of business or organization from the Milwaukee City Directory</i>
725	Park Theater
726	Thaddeus F. Wasielewski Lawyer
“	Alvin J. Olszyk Lawyer
“	Leo P. Herrick Real Estate
728	Charles E. Gillett Sausage
729	National Medical Research Laboratory
730	Bix Six & Tavern Bowling Alleys
731	Sylvester L. Heller Grocery
734	Walter B. Celichowski Lawyer
“	Edward G. Burke Real Estate
“	Jerome S. Wroblewski Lawyer
735	C. Niss & Sons Furniture
738	Mayer-Krom Co. Men's Clothing
800	Samson's Enterprises Inc. Household Appliances
801	Colonial Store Clothes Retail
803	Veteran's Appliance Store
805	Midwest Tire Auto Stores
806	Blazius B. Krygier Dentist
“	William Gilsch Physician
“	Ralph R. Wichgers Chiropractor
807	Columbia Credit Clothiers
808	Matt E. Duggan Co. Jewelers
“	Bernard H. Woldgram Watch Repair
809	Eugene Terry Optometrist
“	Blumenthal & Loeb Lawyers & Accountants
810	Economy Shoe Store
811	Publix Liquor Co.
812	Herman Kupper Inc. Jewelers & Optometrist
“	Ernest Keene Watch Repair
813	Snader's Credit Clothing Stores

<i>Address on W. Mitchell St.</i>	<i>Name of business or organization from the Milwaukee City Directory</i>
815	Walter H. Kleinschmidt Dentist
"	Fred R. Wasisco Chiropractor
816	Alf D. Barnett Men's Clothing
817	JM Schneider & Sons Real Estate & Insurance
822	Charles Schudson Inc. Men's Clothing
823	Rogers Jewelry Inc.
825	Kleczka & Frisch Lawyers
826	Polly Frocks Shops
827	Community Stoves Inc. Household Appliances
828	Vets Emporium General Merchandise
830	Arthur S. Brostek Dentist
"	Sidney B. Podell Lawyer
"	George Yep Lawyer
831	Roman M. Przbylski Meats
832	Krown Camera Co. Photo Supplies
833	Mitchell Smoke Shop
834	Radius Inc. Clothing
"	Ted Greene Clothiers
835	Fendryk & Fendryk Lawyers
"	Fendryk Realty Co.
"	Charles F. Springob Dentist
"	Mitchell Business Brokers
"	Mitchell Realty Agency
836	Louis A. Bernhard Physician
"	Jonathan Slomowitz Physician
"	Zachary Slomowitz Physician
837	Dixie Coffee Shop
838	Joe Goldman Jeweler Inc.
839	Babyland Furniture
908	Hill's Dry Goods

<i>Address on W. Mitchell St.</i>	<i>Name of business or organization from the Milwaukee City Directory</i>
908	Purity Treets Popcorn
"	LO Shoe Corp.
"	Ejay's Stationary & Gifts
"	Hill's Beauty Salon
"	Public Shoe Service Shoe Repair
"	Harry Hess Confectionary
929	Fons & Co. Real Estate
"	National Savings & Loan Association
"	Fons, Stoecker & Mietus Lawyers
"	Stanley L. Krzysko Physician
"	Alvin J. Brown Dentist
930	Goldman & Sons Department Store
"	R & H Appliance Co
"	Electric Lighting & Appliance Co.
"	Alvin La Pidus Shoes
"	Jacob Pershitz Shoe Repair
"	Sam Pivar Clothing
"	Goldman's Fountain & Grill Restaurant
933	Local Loan Co.
935	Schubert's Food Market
937-39	First Wisconsin National Bank Building
"	Metropolitian Life Insurance Co.
1000-06	F.W. Woolworth Co.
1003	Bloch-Daneman Co. Furniture
1009	Bern Howard Inc. Women's Apparel
1011	Jonnie Walker's Men's Furnishing
1013	Helm's Women's Clothing
1015	Gurda-Strange Real Estate & Insurance
"	Francis S. Gurda Architect
"	Thaddeus B. Sytkowski Chiropractor

<i>Address on W. Mitchell St.</i>	<i>Name of business or organization from the Milwaukee City Directory</i>
1017	Lawton's Clothes Inc.
1020-30	Ed Schuster & Co. Department Store
1023	South Side Sausage Co.
1025	Model Hat Shop
1027	Omar Inc. Bakery
1029-31	Reed Drug Co.
1033	Hong Hang Restaurant
1035	Waier's Women's Furnishings
"	Trojan Bridal
1039-41	Mitchell Street State Bank Building
"	Elmer F. Reinke Insurance
"	Ben Lewis Lawyer
"	Lewis Realty Co.
"	Daul Lewis Lawyer
"	John A. Mietus Dentist
"	Conrad E. Mietus Dentist
"	Roman J. Paradowski Dentist
"	Francis J. Laczniak Dentist
1100	Walgreen Drug Co.
1101	The Grand Women's Clothing
"	CM Roussy Shoes
"	C & G Bates Co. Inc. Milliners
1104	GR Kinney E Co. Shoes
1108	The Big Shoe Store
1114	Skowron's Women's Clothing
"	Eva's Bridal Shop
1116	Unger Clothing Co.
1117	Fair Store Beauty Shop
"	Hellen Ames Allen Photography
1119	Fair Gift Shop

<i>Address on W. Mitchell St.</i>	<i>Name of business or organization from the Milwaukee City Directory</i>
1122	Parfay Shops Women's Apparel
1124	Paris Shoe Shop
1125	Granada Theater
1126	Fanny Farmer Candy Shops Inc.
1128	Modjeska Building
"	Frank J. Schubert Physician
"	Walter L. Krygier Physician
"	Horace Rosen Real Estate
"	Edmund Brzezinski Physician
"	Eugene J. Pawinski Dentist
"	Val-Valerie Beauty Salon
1130	Thom McAn Shoes
1131	Max A. Branovan Shoes
1134	Modjeska Theater
1135-37	JC Penney Co. Inc.
1138	Caramel Popcorn Shops Inc.
1200	Three Sisters Women's Clothing
1201-05	L. Wieman Co. Department Store
1202	Jack & Jill Clothing Stores
1204	Lingenfelder's Photo & Cards
1206	Lohagen Black
"	Abraham I. Greenberg Physician
"	Sol V. Stern Dentist
"	Household Finance Corp Loans
"	Paris Ballroom
1207	Royal Crown Hosiery
1208	National Shoe Store
1209	E.G. Shinner & Company Meats
1210	United Liquor Co.
1212	Edward L. Goldhammer Paints

<i>Address on W. Mitchell St.</i>	<i>Name of business or organization from the Milwaukee City Directory</i>
1213	Bornheimer Cigar Stores
1216	S & M Food Market
1217	Foemming Brothers Florists
"	Modjeska Flower Shop
1218	Arthur J. Kampmeier Physician
1221	Stone Jewelers Inc.
1222	Wisconsin Cleaners & Dryers
1223	Singer Sewing Machine Co.
1227	Marious Bridal Shoppe
1225	Butler Building
"	Lester M. Hallen Dentist
"	Raymond A. Dempsey Dentist
"	Leonard Roncke Real Estate
"	Wisconsin Bookkeeping Service
"	First Credit Co.
"	Motors Acceptance Co.
"	Financial Services Co.
"	WRJN-FM Radio Station
"	Walter E. Meyer Signs
"	United Roof Ventilator Corp
1226	Perma Floor Covering Co.
1227	JJ Ripple Shoe Co.
1229-37	Singer's Women's Clothing Inc.
1230	Jamie's Restaurant
1300-08	Hack's Furniture & Appliance Stores
1304	Mitchell Recreation Bowling & Tavern
1320-30	City Market
1331	Witolel Janik Tavern
1333	Sun Fang Laundry
1335	Dolly Madison Bakery

<i>Address on W. Mitchell St.</i>	<i>Name of business or organization from the Milwaukee City Directory</i>
1400	Stanley B. Jack Used Cars
1401	B.F. Goodrich Co.
1406	Merry Makers Bar
1407-09	Milwaukee Sewing Machine Co.
1411	Kod Vent Metal Awning Co.
1415	Sievert Distributing Co. Radios
1417	Accordion Warehouse Musical Instruments
"	Academy of Music Music Teachers
1426	John M. Derynda Groceries
1437	Charles E. Wisinewski Dentist
1438	Casey's Alamo Tavern
1500	The Embassy Tavern
1505	Harry's Service Station
1511-15	Mitchell Street Motor Sales
1516	Eric Schmidt Baker
1522	Ray's Smoke Shop
1523	Leonard J. Ciancolo Fruits
1525	Tompkin's Ice Cream Co.
1526	Edward J. Wanasek Barber
1534	John L. Coyne Drugs
1535	Clement Lemanczyk Tavern
1550	Bernard A. Singer Tavern
1551	Berdes Green Lantern Tavern
1558	Vic-Kum Chemicals Inc.
1562	Milwaukee Pet Store
1565	Kate's Children's Wear
1567	Jay Radio & Appliance
1569	William Volkitis Jeweler
1571	Langolis Health Foods
1573	Emily Schurtz Carpet Weavers

<i>Address on W. Mitchell St.</i>	<i>Name of business or organization from the Milwaukee City Directory</i>
1574	Little Prince's Beauty Salon
1575	Marvin Poppy Shoe Repair
1576	Wally's Mitchell Street Self-Serve Laundry
1577	South Side Realty

Notes from U.S. census and other public records:

- Again, few of the shopkeepers had high school educations. They were highly diverse. Carl Frank Ponick, of 425 W. Mitchell, appeared to have been a German Russian—a member of a German community that migrated into Russia. At various times he listed his nationality as Russian or German in census records.
- Stanley Huras, of 505 and 525 W. Mitchell, was a Polish immigrant with a long-standing music store on Mitchell. The store showed up in records as early as 1923. He may have been a barber before going into the music business. A Stanislaus Huras appeared as a barber in Riverwest in 1915.
- Sadie, of Sadie's Flower Shop at 515 W. Lincoln, was not from Poland. Her maiden name was Plese (sometimes spelled Plesh) and her parents were likely either Serbian, Bosnian, Austrian, Hungarian, Slovenian, or Croatian, as they came from Yugoslavia. Sadie was born in MN in 1920 and later moved to West Allis with her parents. Her father's name was Anthony and mother's maiden name was Pauline Kazele. Sadie married a Zielinski (no doubt a Pole) sometime before taking up shop on Mitchell. He may have died young. She appeared to have taken in several partners to make it at the flower shop, with the last partner being, perhaps, her son. It appeared that the flower shop was her life, because in her later years after she no longer operated the flower shop, she moved above the shop.
- Max B. Anton, of 601 W. Mitchell, was actually born Mac Antonowsky, a child of Russian Jewish immigrants, Samuel and Gusta Antonowsky. Samuel worked as a peddler. The Antonowsky's not only shortened their names, but modified their country of origin to census-takers—from Russia to Germany. This was not uncommon, as Germany was considered a higher status ancestral home than Russia, and many Russian Jews could justify their self-reports because they had older ancestry in Germany.
- Notes on the Park Theater at 725 W. Mitchell. At times an address of 725 1/2 was listed. During the 1920s the 1/2 address belonged to the Mitchell Inn or a shoe shiner named George Frakos. In 1887 there was a Park Theatre Company with Joseph Flanner as president, W.W. Wittig as secretary/treasurer at 328 Grand Avenue. It is not known if this corporation preceded the Park Theater on Mitchell.
- Alvin J. Olszyk, the lawyer at 726 W. Mitchell, was a WWII vet. He joined up when he'd just finished his second year of college and served the duration of the war. He died young at age 44.
- Sylvester L. Heller, of 731 W. Mitchell, did well in his meat market. The son of Polish immigrants, he was living on the "gold coast" of Layton Boulevard by 1930.

- Ralph R. Wichgers, the chiropractor at 806 W. Mitchell, had gone to Bay View High. In 1940 he was in the Coast Guard stationed at St. Francis. The Wichgers were Dutch.
- Sidney B. Podell, the lawyer at 830 W. Mitchell, was raised in the Sherman Park neighborhood. His father Louis was a Jewish immigrant from Russia and worked as a clothing salesman.
- Goldmann's was founded by Abraham Goldmann and his son Leo, both immigrants from Lithuania/Russia. Abraham's wife was named Rosie. Allen Goldmann, Abraham's grandson, also managed the store.
- There is a connection between architect Francis Gurda at 1015 W. Mitchell and John Gurda the Milwaukee historian. Not an uncle to John, but a cousin. Brothers Leon and Francis Gurda worked together at first, and then Leon was appointed Milwaukee's chief building inspector, a post he held from the 1920s to the 1950s.
- The Modjeska Theater at 1128 W. Mitchell officially opened in 1910. Initially the theater featured vaudeville. It was named after the Polish actress Helena Modjeska (1840-1909) who specialized in Shakespearean roles.
- No information could be found on the "Paris ballroom."
- John M. Derynda, the grocer at 1426 W. Mitchell, left high school when he was 16 to become an apprentice in a machine shop. He was the son of Polish immigrants.
- Leonard J. Ciancolo, with the fruit shop at 1523 W. Mitchell, was the son of Italian immigrants. His parents gave their homeland as Italy on the 1930 census but said their native tongue was "German." Leonard's father was a fruit peddler.
- William Volkitis, the jeweler from 1569 W. Mitchell, was a Lithuanian immigrant.

Current populations (as of 2021)

Mexican Americans are today the largest cultural group on the Old South Side that had once been Milwaukee's Polish stronghold. They began to settle in the Walker's Point area in the 1920s and slowly migrated south into the neighborhoods developed by Polish immigrants. Since the 1970s, the Mexican community has grown dramatically, and other Latinos have arrived from the Caribbean and Central and South America. They have been joined more recently by Southeast Asians—especially Hmong, Burmese and Vietnamese refugees—and African Americans, Arabs, and North American Indians.

A number of push-pull factors influenced the population changes. During the early 1900s Mexican immigration to the United States expanded because of worsening economic conditions in Mexico. A large wave of Mexicans also left the country during the political and economic turmoil created by the Mexican Revolution of 1910. Beginning in 1917, the US government implemented a series of immigration restriction policies to curb the influx of Mexicans, mainly in response to local claims that Mexicans (who often worked for low wages) were taking jobs away from 'true' Americans.

Although most Mexicans found jobs in local tanneries and foundries, some came to Milwaukee as strikebreakers—often unknowingly. They were hired by companies that were intent on breaking their own labor unions, and the Mexicans earned the enmity of the European workers they replaced. This situation led to early discrimination against Mexican Americans in Milwaukee.

But they found a place to fit in. Latinos were able to settle successfully alongside the Poles because they shared so many traits in common. These included the Catholic faith, the focus on the Madonna figure, polka music traditions, similarities in childrearing and eldercare practices, and an entrepreneurial spirit.

Today’s population in the Historic Mitchell Street neighborhood is just over three-quarters Latino, and slightly over half of the area population speaks Spanish as their first language in the home. The remaining population is fairly evenly divided between European- and African-Americans, with a scattering of Asians, Arabs, and North American Indians.

The Historic Mitchell neighborhood skews young. Over one-third of the population is under the age of 20. Slightly over half the residents have an annual household income below \$25,000, which means that most residents live in low income households. The most common occupational categories in Historic Mitchell Street are production, food service, and facilities (building/maintenance).

Most residents are also renters, as opposed to being home owners. Over three-quarters of the property units are likely to be rented (which may also be due to the large number of duplexes on these blocks). However, the good news for people who find this neighborhood intriguing is that the rents are low. More than 1 in 10 property units rent for under \$500 and most rent for \$500 to \$1,000 a month. This is low rent, even by Milwaukee standards.

INTERESTING FEATURES

- **St. Stanislaus Church** at 5th and Mitchell, the first Polish church in America (see photo).
- **The Greater Mitchell Street BID** at 823 W. Mitchell, an organization to stabilize and revitalize Mitchell Street business corridor.
- **The Modjeska Theater** building at 11th and Mitchell, a historic theater that is being restored.
- **Kunzelmann-Esser Lofts**, at 7th and Mitchell, a former furniture center redesigned to house artists and art lovers in affordable loft spaces (see photo).

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.

DOORS OPEN MILWAUKEE ON HISTORIC MITCHELL			
When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late Sep., Sat. thru Sun.	Mitchell St.	Opportunity to tour the inside of two of Mitchell Street’s iconic sites: St. Stanislaus Church and the Modjeska Theater.	Free

Most of these outings are provided courtesy of MECAH Publishing. To access the book that provides nearly 600 outings—all priced under \$10—for the entire Greater Milwaukee area, go to <http://mecahmilwaukee.com/NonFiction.html>

QUOTES FROM RESIDENTS

Quotes from 2002 oral history conducted by Urban Anthropology Inc.¹— About THEN

“When we first moved to Rogers, there were hardly any other Mexicans here. But everything I needed was on Mitchell—you had the Schuster’s and the JC Penney and Goldmann’s and the food places. But when everyone started driving to these places out on the highways and far from here, then these stores moved out of the neighborhood. And then I had to learn to drive.”

“Back then we all lived within a mile or two of one another. There was a lot of exchange. Weddings were huge. Life pretty much focused around the church, food, and grandparents. I remember Polish duck soup—a very tasty soup made with dumplings. There was chicken soup too. We used to have live chickens in the backyard in coops and we would select one chicken to provide the soup. We kids used to feed chickens well. When we cooked a chicken in the old days, you get a good yellow grease on top. That provided the flavor. Today it’s no fat, so it gets salted to add flavor. We didn’t have to salt then. The flavor was in the bird. We used to have grease on rye bread—grease from a goose. They say it’s unhealthy now, but it was tasty. We ate eggs and sausage. They really knew how to cook then. One of the men would kill the chicken. Women cleaned them. They made pillows and bed covers out of feathers. We used everything. We were very inventive, creative, economical.”

“Grandma’s house had like an out-house in the basement with no running water. We used to bathe in the tub with heated water on the stove.”

“What made it so easy for the Mexicans to fit into the neighborhood was we had so much in common with the Poles. What I noticed right away was that the Poles took their kids to the dances and weddings just like we did. We kind of raised our kids alike—to be a real part of the family, not just to be kids that had to be taken care of.”

“The different blends in the city changed the [Polish] language. Polish changed to reflect ‘Mitchell St. Polish’—English words with Polish ends. On Mitchell Street there were so many Jewish vendors. They had Jewish backgrounds with Yiddish words, and they would twist those words and the Poles doing business with them would pick up those words too. When my dad went back to Poland, people didn’t understand him.”

“Mitchell Street was the big shopping store area. All the decorations were beautiful. Schusters was the big thing—it was where the wealthier shopped—and The Grand.”

“Women were expected to stay at home—it was the same with the Polish and the Mexicans. There wasn’t much stress on education for women back then [1950s]. They worked in church organizations. The oldest son was considered the most powerful.”

¹ 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.

“Things changed in the seventies. That era changed the way we looked at things. I remember, ‘don’t trust anyone over 30.’ It pulled young away from seniors. We didn’t socialize with older people anymore. That’s where traditions ended. I think the Polish center and the ethnic festivals had a lot to do with restoring this. The center helped by offering lessons in Polish. We are getting huge numbers. Students in the classes are college-age to 60. I envy the Hispanic and Asian communities where they speak the language at home.”

Quotes from 2010 oral history updated by Urban Anthropology Inc.—About NOW

“There has been the changing of Mitchell Street. The Old South Side is coming back with lots of new businesses. Sears and Gimbels left, and now the family-run ones are taking over.”

“I’m glad we have the ethnic festivals for Mexicans and Polish. You used to have these bad jokes about the Mexicans and before that the Polish. After the festivals it got to be okay to be Polish and Mexican. Now you can portray the best of the cultures. The awful jokes aren’t there today.”

“What I see today with the Hispanics is that they are like the Poles. They have the stores and the businesses. But if they do well they have no desire to flaunt their wealth. They stay low key like the Poles did in this neighborhood.”

PHOTOS



Today's neighborhood-Corner of 6th & Mitchell



Today's neighborhood-St. Stanislaus Church on a rainy day



Today's neighborhood-Kunzelmann-Esser Building



Today's neighborhood-Los Potrillos Western Wear

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@currently.com

ⁱ Photo attribution: <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/94/AlSimmonsGoudeycard.jpg>



www.urban-anthropology.org