

*Approximate boundaries:*  
N-W. Cornell St; S-W. Capitol Dr;  
E-N. Green Bay Ave, W-N. Teutonia Ave

# FAR NORTH SIDE *Rufus King*

## NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION

Rufus King is a densely populated neighborhood. The main home architectural style is the bungalow and there are also a number of Tudor-style houses that date from the early 20th century. Most of the streets in this neighborhood follow a rectangular grid pattern. A few major streets run at a diagonal, including those that form the east and west boundaries of the neighborhood--North Green Bay and North Teutonia Avenues. In addition, a section of West Cornell Street that defines the north border of the neighborhood, runs at an angle from North Teutonia to North 19th Place, and West Atkinson and West Roosevelt run at diagonals from North 19th and 20th Streets to North Teutonia. The main business corridor is located along North Green Bay Avenue.

Rufus King neighborhood is mainly flat with a few gently rolling hills and two modest areas of open space. Small triangles of green space are located in the southwest corner of the neighborhood to the south of the Milwaukee Public Library-Atkinson Branch, and another is along the south side of West Cornell Street.

## HISTORY

The Rufus King neighborhood was named after its high school of the same name. The high school was named after a Civil War general who became a passionate advocate for public education.

### Early populations



Today's neighborhood-  
Rufus King High School –  
west entrance detail

Most of the earliest settlers in the Rufus King area were Germans. In 1835, the Town of Milwaukee (not to be confused with the City of Milwaukee) was created, which included today's Rufus King neighborhood. The boundaries of the Town of Milwaukee stretched from Greenfield Avenue on the south to County Line Road on the north, and Lake Michigan on the east to 27th Street on the west. Just four years later a road was developed by the federal government that stretched to Green Bay, and was aptly named the Green Bay Road. The thoroughfare, which was nothing more than a wagon trail in its early years, traveled through today's Rufus King neighborhood. Many, mainly German, settlers built farms along the road.

In the early 20th century, the Milwaukee Northern Railway was completed that extended from Milwaukee to Sheboygan, with arbitrary stops within today's Rufus King neighborhood. By the late 1920s, the City of

Milwaukee annexed the Rufus King area and new housing gradually began to join, and sometimes replace, the earlier farms. The area attracted many settlers interested in a neighborhood upgrade, and this was reflected in the quality of housing stock that was constructed. Most of these early families were again Germans, with a scattering of Jews, Italians, Czechs, Poles, and Scandinavians.

Because so many young families were settling in the area, schools were needed. By 1931, Emanuel Philipp Grade School was built--named after a Wisconsin governor who served between 1914 and 1920. By 1934, Rufus King High School was completed.

Green Bay Avenue, which had been the early conduit to the neighborhood, later became its main commercial corridor.

*Green Bay Avenue*

The following is a list of businesses on North Green Bay Avenue in 1947 following World War II. See summary and notes that follow.

<i>Addresses on N. Green Bay Ave. in the Rufus King neighborhood in 1947</i>	<i>Businesses, organizations, apartments from the Milwaukee City Directory</i>
4087	George Amrhein Market Gardener
4107	Robert R. Schoof Excavation Contractor
4130	Erich Kasten Trucking
4141	Benzing Monument Company
4173	Justus C. Roegge Grocery & Meats
4175	Dorothy Lein Gifts
4200	Lola Mi Cigar Company Manufacturers Inc. J. Froehlich & Sons Whole Leaf Tobacco, Inc.
4206	Union Refrigerator Transfer Company
4238	Char-Vie Trailodge Camp
4328	Wisconsin Barrel & Drum Company Globe Auto Parts Company
4328A	Michael Borenitch Cattle Dir.
4344	Drott Manufacturing Contractors Equipment Corporation
4377	Apartments
4380	The Froemming Corporation Building Materials
4385	Zetterlund Engineering Works
4400	Ajax Auto Supply Company Lorence Manufacturing Acme Gear Company
4453	Archie Backus Filling Station
4485	Wisconsin Face Brick & Supply Building Materials Corporation Builders Fuel & Supply Company

## Notes from U.S. Census and other public records.

- Green Bay Road in 1947 was clearly an avenue that was connecting the country with the developing urban area, as evidenced by a cattle company, the camp, a garden market, and building contractors.
- Technically, only those addresses on the west side (odd numbers) of the street were within the Rufus King neighborhood. But residents could easily access any businesses on Green Bay Road.
- As in most Milwaukee neighborhoods prior to 1970, few shopkeepers had attended high school. Most were also immigrants or children of immigrants.
- George Amrhein, with the garden market, listed himself as a florist in 1940. Typical of the shopkeepers, he had completed the 8th grade. He was the grandson of immigrants from France and Germany.
- Robert R. Schoof, the contractor, was the son of a German immigrant. He'd completed the 8th grade.
- Erich Kasten, with the trucking company, was the son of German immigrants. He'd driven a truck for another company before opening his business.
- Justus C. Roegge, the grocer, was also the son of a German immigrant. He'd come to Milwaukee from Illinois.
- Dorothy Lein, with the gift shop, was again the child of a German immigrant. She was an anomaly on the streets, as she'd completed two years of high school. She never married.
- Mi Lola, with the cigar company, had the apparent full name of M Mis E Bobs Lola. Nothing was found on him except that he lived on State Street in 1910.
- Michael Borenitch, with the cattle company, was apparently an immigrant from Yugoslavia.
- Archie Backus, with the filling station, was the grandson of German immigrants.

### *Mid-twentieth century in Rufus King*

Because homes were still being built in the Rufus King neighborhood during the Great Depression and World War II, the area did not experience much of a post-war housing boom. By 1960 the neighborhood was completely filled.

It was also during these years that African Americans began to arrive in Rufus King. In the 1950s most of the new migrants were professionals. Later, other upwardly mobile blacks began to move to the area. This happened for two reasons: (1) the need for housing following the razing of over 8,000 homes in the African American Bronzeville community in the late 1950s through the mid-1960s (see [Halyard Park neighborhood](#)), and (2) the availability of family-supporting jobs in the North and Northwest Side communities.

As in most German-dominated areas in Milwaukee, the integration of the new population proceeded relatively smoothly, particularly after the passage of the national fair housing law and the Milwaukee fair housing law in 1968. Many African American families were able to purchase homes and become fixtures in the middle class.

See one interesting resident of this time below.

## Rufus King resident (1950s)

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

### Baseball Hall of Famer, Henry Aaron

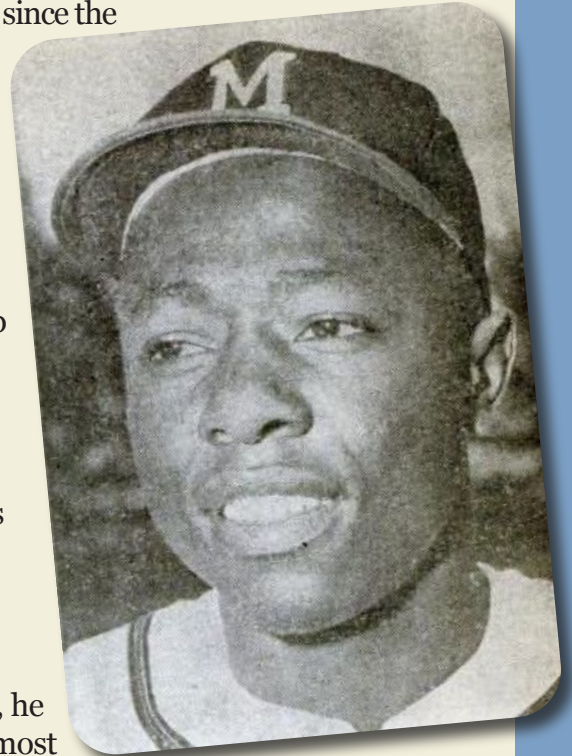
Born in 1934 in Mobile, Alabama to parents Herbert and Stella (nee Pritchett), Henry Aaron became a baseball superstar. While playing for the Milwaukee Braves he and his family lived in the Rufus King neighborhood, at 4025 North 14th Street.

Henry (*see public domain photo*) was named after his grandfather, the descendent of slaves. His parents and grandparents had been sharecroppers since the Reconstruction Era in the American South. While Henry loved sports, his family was too poor to afford baseball equipment. He learned to bat balls by hitting bottle caps with sticks he'd whittled into the shape of bats.

Aaron played baseball briefly in the Negro Leagues before being scouted and offered a major league contract from the Boston Braves organization. The Braves moved to Milwaukee in 1953 and that same year, Aaron was called up from the minors for spring training. He performed so well that he made the team. The high caliber play continued throughout his rookie year and by the season's end his teammates were calling him "Hammerin' Hank."

Aaron went on to become one of the greatest players ever to grace the game. He won the Most Valuable Player award in 1957 (while also taking his team to a world championship), and the triple crown in 1963. With the Milwaukee and later Atlanta Braves, he became the eighth player in baseball ever to hit 500 career homeruns. In 1973, he fell one homerun short of tying Babe Ruth's record for the most homeruns ever in baseball. During that offseason he began to receive a barrage of racially charged death threats from unknown sources. Aaron admitted that he feared he would not live to break the record. But he did. During the following season he both tied and broke Ruth's record at 715 homeruns.

In 1974, Aaron returned to Milwaukee to play out his final years as a Milwaukee Brewer. The following year he broke baseball's all-time RBI record, once again held by Babe Ruth—a record that still holds. His homerun record held for 33 years. Hammerin' Hank Aaron was inducted into the Baseball Hall of fame in 1982.



### *Late 20th century in Rufus King*

Unfortunately, the deindustrialization trend that began in the 1980s arrested the movement of African Americans into the middle class. Manufacturing employment in Milwaukee fell 77 percent, from a peak in 1963 to the present. What had been a mainly middle class area on the North Side was in economic decline.

## Current populations (as of 2021)

Today, the Rufus King neighborhood has just over 5,000 residents. Just under 9 in 10 are African Americans. Approximately 3 percent each are European Americans (mostly of mixed European ancestry), Latinos (nearly all of Puerto Rican descent), and people of multiple racial backgrounds.

The median household income in Rufus King is just under \$32,000, placing the neighborhood in the lower middle-income stratum. The main jobs held by adult residents are in the fields of administration, sales, management, and education. Over three times the number of Rufus King residents work in the field of computers/math than the proportion in other Milwaukee neighborhoods.

## INTERESTING NEIGHBORHOOD FEATURES

- **Rufus King International High School**, at 1801 W. Olive, a rigorous college preparatory school with an excellent athletic program.
- **Milwaukee Public Library—Atkinson Branch**, at 1960 W. Atkinson, with a large computer lab and job search services.

## 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.

### JULY 4TH CELEBRATION—LINCOLN PARK

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
July 4th, dusk	Lincoln Park, 1301 W. Hampton Ave., Glendale	Fireworks at dusk.	Free

### NATIONAL NIGHT OUT

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
First week Aug., weekday 4-8pm	Lincoln Park: 1301 W. Hampton Ave., Glendale	Fun evening of free food, games, rides, chance to dialogue with local police and community organizations.	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

*If you are a resident in Rufus King and wish to make an uplifting observation about this neighborhood, please send your quote to [jflanthropologist@currently.com](mailto:jflanthropologist@currently.com)*

# PHOTOS



Todays neighborhood-  
Rufus King High School – west entrance



Todays neighborhood-  
Antioch Missionary Baptist Church at  
21st & W. Congress St.

Todays neighborhood-Houses on 21st St  
& W. Roosevelt Dr.



Today's neighborhood-Emanuel Philipp School, now closed



Today's neighborhood- Emanuel Philipp School (Mother Goose entrance detail)



Today's neighborhood-Houses on 21st St.



Today's neighborhood-Houses on 14th & W. Olive St.

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 Dr. Jill Florence Lackey at: [jflanthropologist@currently.com](mailto:jflanthropologist@currently.com)