

Approximate boundaries:
N-Hank Aaron State Trail; S-W. Greenfield Ave;
E-S. 31st St, W-S. 38th St

SOUTHWEST SIDE *Silver City*

NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION

Silver City is densely populated with mainly two-story wood frame houses and bungalows. The main business district is on National Avenue from 34th to 37th Street. West Pierce Street runs along the northern boundary and has many industrial buildings that house active businesses, and some have been converted to new uses. Along this street is the office of the Wisconsin Bike Federation, Escuela Verde, and the Urban Ecology Center.

The neighborhood is strong in cafes. In fact, Silver City has more than 10 times the number of cafes than the average for Wisconsin. Bars also abound. Silver City has over 30 percent more bars than the average for Wisconsin.

Three Bridges Park is partly in Silver City, directly behind the Urban Ecology Center. The park is 24 acres and is the largest city-owned park in Milwaukee. It extends into the Menomonee Valley and has paths that are part of the Hank Aaron State Trail.

HISTORY

Silver City got its name in the mid-1890s when area laborers working in the developing Menomonee Valley factories were paid in silver coin. When the workers circulated the silver among the area's 24 taverns, the name "Silver City" began to appear in Milwaukee newspapers.

But long before there was industry in the Valley or laborers paid in silver, other populations occupied the area.

Early populations

American Indians, including the Potawatomi, settled in villages on the land in and around the Menomonee Valley for centuries before Europeans arrived. They developed and used a path between today's Milwaukee and Mukwonago on the Fox River. This well-worn path, called the Mukwonago (or Mequanigo) Road was also used by arriving European pioneers. A change occurred shortly after the end of the Civil War when the federal government opened the National Soldiers' Home for veterans of the Union army on 410 acres just west of Milwaukee's border. The Mukwonago Road became the southern entrance to the complex, which led to a name change—first to National Home Road and then to National Avenue.

The area that is today's Silver City was settled by Europeans in the late 1800s. Many new settlers followed the jobs, which were quickly developing in the Menomonee Valley. Industries included the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad, Falk, Robert A. Johnston Company, and Harnischfeger Corporation. National Avenue would become the commercial center of the developing community. The earliest European arrivals to this area were Germans, Irish, Scandinavians and some Yankees. Gypsy (Romani) camps even appeared at an area called Conrad's Grove at today's 33rd and National.



By 1900, over 2,000 residents lived in the village of Silver City. But following a series of costly fires, residents began calling for more services, leading ultimately to the village joining the City of Milwaukee.

New populations began migrating to the neighborhood, including Croats and Slovenians. The area remained strongly European until the late 20th century.

National Avenue

National became the main commercial corridor for the Silver City area. The following is a list of businesses that were in Silver City on National in 1933, at the height of the Great Depression. As in many Milwaukee neighborhoods, the ethnic backgrounds of the shopkeepers were often more diverse than the ethnicity of the residents they served. See notes below.

<i>Addresses on W. National in Silver City in 1933</i>	<i>Names of businesses, offices, organizations, apartments from the <u>Milwaukee City Directory</u></i>
3101	Wendel & Son Grocery
3103	Bert B. Busby Dentist Warren R. Tuft Physician
3109	Hoelsken's Pharmacy
3134	Crestaloma Apartments
3227-3229-3231	Melvin G. Luckow Auto Repair
3230	Otto Klug Barber
3242	Lauber Handle Manufacturing Company
3300	Matthew Udove Tavern
3303	Grace Theatre
3309	Walter W. Jennerjahu Confectioner
3310	Johnson Service Station
3319	Hugo Mehl Physician
3331	Cream City Furnace and Sheet Metal Works Company
3333	Henry Nirenberg Dry Goods
3335	Frank Hays Filling Station
3401	Edward Druse Hardware
3408	Max Heller Shoe Repair
3409	Charles Heffling Plumber
3412	Joseph Kane Tavern
3413	Charles F. Keller Tailor
3415	Emil Bailey Barber

<i>Addresses on W. National in Silver City in 1933</i>	<i>Names of businesses, offices, organizations, apartments from the <u>Milwaukee City Directory</u></i>
3418	Wisconsin Cordial Company Malt
3420	Oscar E. Bellew Dentist
3422	Oscar Hagen Restaurant
3423	Frederick Hiehl Physician
3426	Jim Chung Laundry
3427	David Cash Shoes
3430	Peter K. Clauson Paints
3431	Alois Lohberger Baker
3433	Star Market No. 2 Meats
3437	Max Stein Fruits
3500	John J. Crowley Tavern
3501	R&R Drug Shop
3504	John J. Crowley Confectioner
3506	Ace Box Lunch Company
3513	Lewis E. Lewis Barber
3514	Hans H. Strothmann Baker
3515	Max Kimmell Tailor
3516	Ex-Cel Beauty Shop
3519	Anton's Food Stores Inc.
3520	Ex-Cel Beauty Shop
3521	National Cash Meat Market
3522	Clover Beauty Shoppe
3524	Joseph Grandlich Jeweler
3527	Quality Cash Meat Market
3529	National Tea Company Grocery Store
3530	John Prince Tavern
3531	Nathan L. Smith Dry Goods
3601	Acme Pharmacy
3603	Benjamin Erps Physician
3605	Leslie C. Webb Barber

<i>Addresses on W. National in Silver City in 1933</i>	<i>Names of businesses, offices, organizations, apartments from the Milwaukee City Directory</i>
3613	Madison Christianson Company General Contractors
3615	Matthew Fischer Shoe Repair
3617	James Ottaway Dentist
3622	John Mozol Barber
3623	Paul O. Erdmann Auto Repair
3624	William L. Biggs Restaurant
3630	Joseph Zaits Tavern
3633	Abraham Laue Dry Goods
3704	Thomas Srdich Tavern
3705	Standard Oil Filling Station
3706-3708	Badger Paint and Hardware Store
3709	John Gruber Meats
3711	Robert L. McNeil Dentist
3717	Gilbert A. John Restaurant
3719	S. Beernink & Son Sheet Metal Works Rudolph Ost Barber
3721	Apartments
3727	Forward Building and Loan Association
3729	Edward J. Groth Real Estate
3730	Louis Evanich Tavern
3731	Thomas Petek Tavern
3737	Struller Beauty Shoppe
3749	John Novak Tavern

Summary and notes from U.S. census and other records:

- Despite Depression times, National Avenue was teeming with commerce in 1933. There were no vacant shops along this stretch. Residents were well-served with 3 grocery stores, 5 butcher shops, 1 bakery, 3 dry goods stores, 6 barbers, 3 pharmacies, 3 gas stations, 4 physicians, and 4 dentists.
- Again, despite Depression times, residents had plenty of options for leisure time activities, including 10 taverns, 3 restaurants, and a theatre.
- As in most Milwaukee neighborhoods prior to 1970, few shopkeepers had attended high school. Most were immigrants or children of immigrants, and nearly all lived at the same addresses as their shops.

- Melvin G. Luckow, with the auto repair shop, was the grandson of German immigrants. He lived to the rear of his shop.
- Matthew Udove/Udovo, with the tavern, was a Slovenian immigrant from Yugoslavia. Like most taverns in 1933, the establishment had been originally permitted as a “soft drink” parlor during the Prohibition era. Tavern owners also tended to be ethnically diverse in Milwaukee.
- Grace Theatre opened in 1911 and closed in 1957. It seated 405.
- Walter W. Jennerjahn, the confectioner, was the son of German immigrants.
- Henry Nirenberg, with the dry goods store, was a Jewish Russian immigrant, as was his wife Bertha. The family spoke “Hebrew” at home (this would have been Yiddish).
- Charles Heffling, the plumber, was the son of an immigrant from Georgia. His father had worked as a janitor.
- Oscar E. Bellew, the dentist, was from Nebraska. As most professionals on commercial corridors, he was not an immigrant or the son of immigrants.
- Oscar Hagan, with the restaurant, appears to have been of Norwegian extraction.
- Jim Chung, with the laundry, was a Chinese immigrant. Like most Chinese businessmen, he lived alone and lived at the same address as his business.
- Alois Lohberger, the baker, was the son of German immigrants. His father was a wood turner.
- John J. Crowley, with the tavern and the candy store, was the son of Irish immigrants.
- Lewis E. Lewis, the barber, was born in England. His parents were both Welsh.
- Hans H. Strothmann, the baker, was an anomaly on the street because he did not live at the address of his business. He lived on 20th Street, east of the Silver City neighborhood. He was a German immigrant.
- Max Kimmell, the tailor, was a Russian immigrant, probably Jewish.
- Joseph Grandlich, the jeweler, was an Austrian immigrant born in Yugoslavia. He was also a watch maker.
- John Prince, with the tavern, was also an Austrian immigrant born in Yugoslavia.
- Leslie C. Webb, the barber, was from Platteville, Wisconsin. His ethnic ancestry is unknown.
- Abraham Lane, with the dry goods store, had parents born in Russia and Romania. He may have been Jewish.
- Thomas Srdich, with the tavern, was a Croatian born in Yugoslavia.
- Louis Evanich, with the tavern, was an Austrian immigrant.
- Thomas Petek, with the tavern, was also an Austrian immigrant.
- The John Novak Tavern would later become an Indian bar called The Moccasin Bar. See below.

Latinos had been settling in the Walker’s Point neighborhood since the 1920s. However, some of them spread out early into areas like Silver City. Below is the profile of one of Los Primeros of the Mexican American community who settled in the neighborhood.

Spotlight on Walker's Point resident (1920s)

(Photos and other information found on public records at Ancestry.com and other public records)

Federico Herrera

Federico Herrera arrived in Milwaukee in 1927 as a 22-year-old immigrant from El Oro, Mexico. Just before arriving in Walker's Point, he'd played baseball in Texas for the owners of Mexico's Dos Estrella's mines.

Herrera soon established himself with the newly arriving Latinos in Walker's Point and began seeking ways to fill their needs. In just a few years he co-founded Milwaukee's first Spanish-language newspapers, *Sancho Panza* and *Boletín Informativo*, with Miguel Sevilla Chavez and Jesus C. Perez. The trio also founded Circulo Social de Amigos "Emilio Carranza," that commemorated the first Mexican to fly a plane between Mexico City and Washington D.C.

Federico married Sophia and became a naturalized citizen in 1934 (see his photo on his naturalization papers from Ancestry.com). He and his family later moved to the Silver City neighborhood at 939 South 32nd Street. He died in 1992 and was buried at St. Adalbert's Cemetery.



Current populations (as of 2021)

Beginning in the 1970s, many more Latinos began migrating from the Walker's Point neighborhood into Silver City. This included Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Central Americans.

Today over 6 in 10 neighborhood residents are Latino, and nearly half of the residents speak Spanish as their first language. There are also large numbers of Germans, Poles, and Hmong/Lao in the neighborhood.

Slightly less than half of Silver City's population lives in low-income households (with annual incomes less than \$25,000). Employment is high in Silver City. Adults, age 25 to 64, are more likely to be employed than residents of Milwaukee overall. Approximately half of the employed residents work in production, administration, or food service. Women are more likely to be employed in healthcare support.



Today's neighborhood-
Asian International Market

INTERESTING NEIGHBORHOOD FEATURES

- **Urban Ecology Center**, at 3700 W. Pierce, a community organization providing literally hundreds of free or low-cost programs for families and youth.
- **Hank Aaron Trail**, with an access at Three Bridges Park, is a trail with natural and urban views extending from the lakefront to 94th Place.
- **Blocks of the best in Asian food**, centered on 35th and National.

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.

SILVER CITY INTERNATIONAL FOOD AND ART WALK

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late Sep., Sat., 12-5pm	W. National Ave. between 33rd St.&35th St.	Festival to celebrate the diversity of the Silver City neighborhood.	Free

FRIENDS OF HANK AARON STATE TRAIL 5K RUN/WALK

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Early Aug., Sat. 7-8:15am	Start and finish near Klement's Sausage Haus (the east end of Miller Park Stadium)	Opportunity to walk or run in race on Hank Aaron trail, or be a spectator—entertainment and food available. (Requires registration to participate)	Free

SLEDDING THE SLOPES OF MENOMONEE VALLEY

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late Jan. Tues. 4-6pm	Menomonee Valley 3700 W. Pierce	An evening of snow and sledding in Three Bridges Park with hot chocolate (if there is no snow, will hike Three Bridges Park.) Might need to register.	Free

EARLY MORNING BIRDWALK

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Most Tue.'s. 8-10am	Menomonee Valley, 3700 W. Pierce St.	A walk for bird watchers of all ability levels to explore Three Bridges Park for birds. Register at Urban Ecology website.	Free, need to register

FAMILY HIKE

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Mar. & Apr, Nov, Tue.'s 4-6pm	Menomonee Valley, 3700 W. Pierce St.	Guided hike to see changes in seasons through Three Bridges Park. Register at Urban Ecology website.	Free

SHAKESPEARE IN THREE BRIDGES PARK

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late Jul., Fri. 7pm	Menomonee Valley behind Palermo Villa next to 33rd Ct.	Play performed by Summit Players along river in the park.	Free, but donations welcome

ECO ART WEDNESDAYS

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Weds., 4-5:30pm	Menomonee Valley 3700 W. Pierce	Children work on nature-inspired recycled arts and crafts. Take home own creation every week! Register at Urban Ecology website.	\$5 per child

CROSS COUNTRY SKIING FOR KIDS

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late Jan. Thu. 4-6pm	Menomonee Valley, 3700 W. Pierce St.	Bring children to workshop designed just for kids to learn all they need to know before hitting the slopes, with gear provided. Register at Urban Ecology website.	unk

HANK AARON TRAIL

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Daily	Multiple access points; see map on website	Opportunity to enjoy natural and urban views and walk or bike trail across Milwaukee, from the lakefront to 94th Place.	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

No resident has provided a quote to date. If you are a resident of Silver City and would like to say something interesting about this neighborhood, email JFLanthropologist@currently.com

PHOTOS

Today's neighborhood-
Houses on 36th & Pierce



Today's neighborhood-Asian International Market



Today's neighborhood-
Hank Aaron State Trail



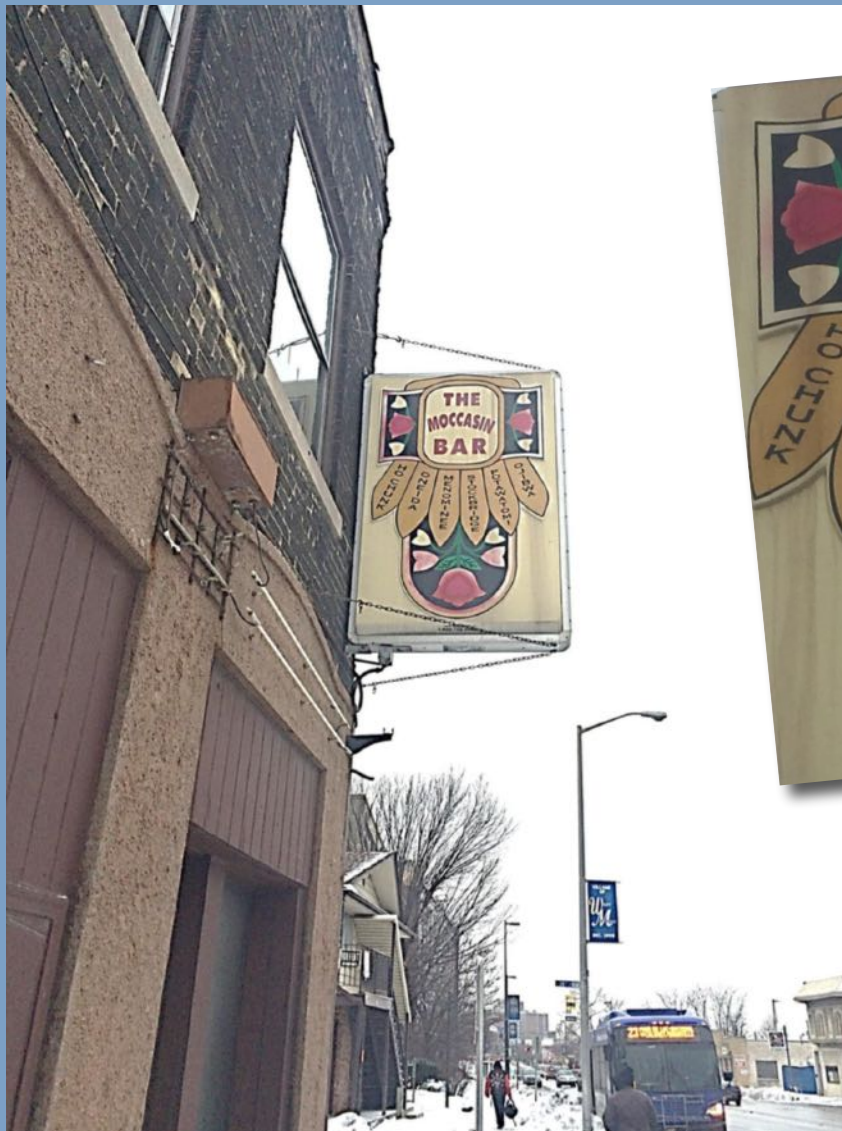
Todays neighborhood-Industrial buildings on Pierce St.



Todays neighborhood-Urban Ecology Center

OLDER PHOTOS FROM RESIDENTS

An Indian bar was once located at 3749 W. National Ave. Below is the sign (photo submitted by Jacqueline Schram). See the long view and the close-up.

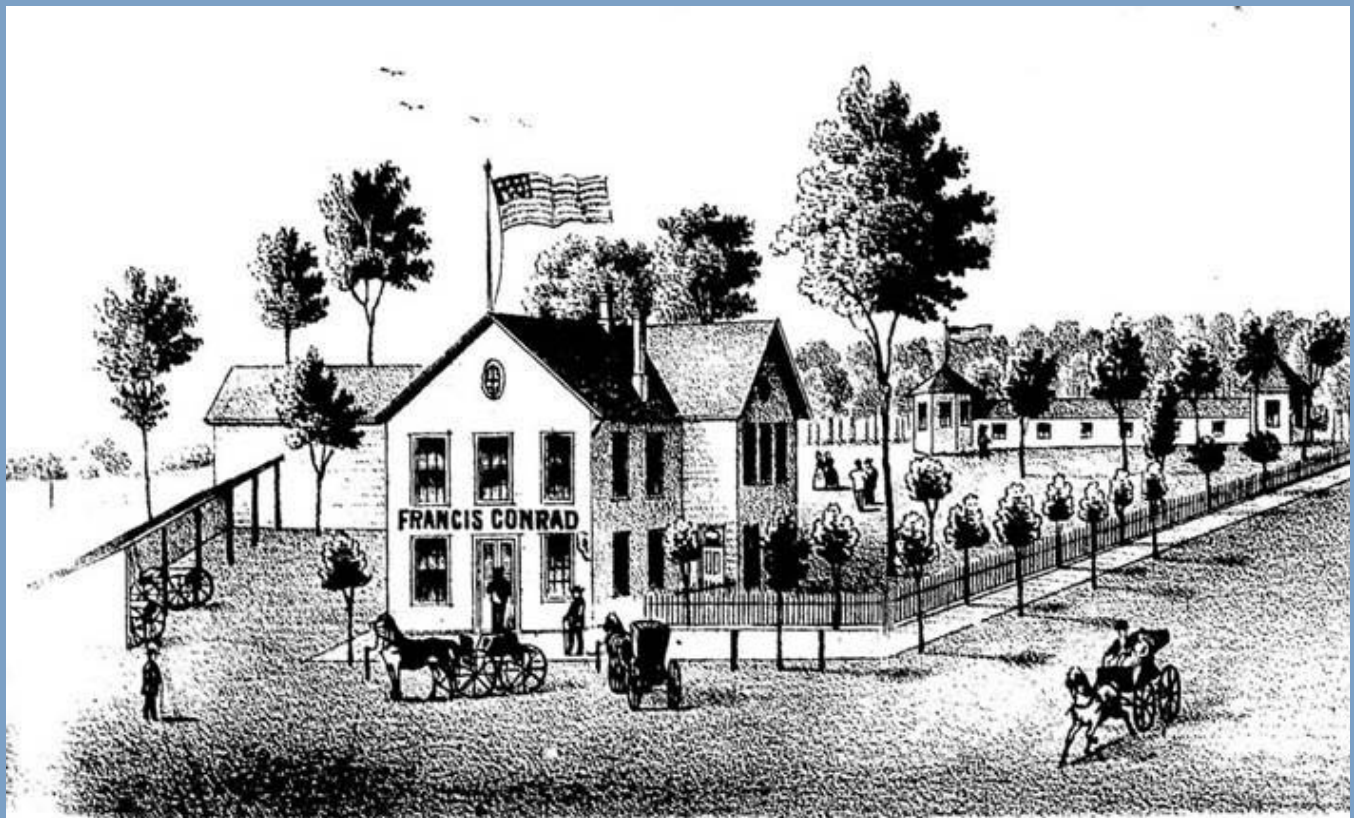


For more information on Milwaukee neighborhoods, refer to John Gurda's *Milwaukee, City of Neighborhoods* and Jill Florence Lackey's and Rick Petrie's *Germans in Milwaukee: A neighborhood history*.

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



www.urban-anthropology.org



"CONRAD'S GROVE"
PROPERTY OF **FRANCIS CONRAD**, Elizabeth St., MILWAUKEE, Wis.

In 1874, Francis Conrad purchased a couple of acres of land on Elizabeth Street (National Avenue) just over the city limits (32nd Street), where he established a popular park and beer garden, complete with a saloon, bowling alley, and dance hall. Conrad's Grove, as it was called, was located conveniently just across the way from the Bavaria Brewery owned by Franz Falk. Image courtesy of descendant Robert Conrad.