

Approximate boundaries:
N-W. North Ave; **S**-W. Walnut St;
E-N. Holton St, **W**-W-Dr. M.L.K. Dr

NORTH SIDE *Brewers Hill*

NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION

Brewer's Hill is a bi-level community with lowlands on the west bank of the Milwaukee River and, above this, a broad plateau that overlooks much of the City of Milwaukee. Archaeologists have found effigy mounds on the bluff suggesting an early presence of Late Woodland people.

Today's neighborhood is a densely populated residential area that has a large number of houses built in the mid to late 19th century in a variety of styles. On every block there are many recently-restored examples of Queen Anne, Italianate, Second Empire, and Greek Revival houses. There are a number of new condominiums scattered amidst the historic homes.

The main business corridor is on Martin Luther King Drive on the neighborhood's western border. See photos below.

HISTORY

According to John Gurda in *Milwaukee: A City of Neighborhoods*, a visit to Brewer's Hill "is to see first-hand the American city's capacity for reinvention" (p. 175). His chapter on Brewer's Hill outlines the movement from earliest settlements to blight to a preservationist's delight.

Early populations

Most of today's Brewer's Hill neighborhood was once platted into a subdivision called Sherman's Additive. This was 1837. Within a score of years the area began to attract mills and factories that were drawn partly by the water sources from a half-finished canal (that, once filled in, became Commerce Street) and partly by a railroad line dubbed the Beerline B (built in the 1850s). Large numbers of Milwaukeeans seeking the industrial jobs began migrating into the subdivision.

By the 1880s the area was crowded with resident homes from Walnut Street to North Avenue. It was a time when workers and employers walked to work. Industry tycoons might live next door to their line workers and business owners might live next door to their customers. The economic diversity led to a wide range of housing sizes and styles in the neighborhood including Queen Annes, Greek Revivals, and Italianates. A century later, many of these homes would be coveted by young professionals with a preservationist appetite.



Today's neighborhood-
Fire Station and commercial building on Palmer St.

Early on, most of the residents were Germans. Part of the Sixth Ward, the Brewer's Hill area began to draw even more industries and businesses, including the Schlitz Brewery and Albert Trostel & Sons Tannery. With the industrial jobs came additional immigrant groups migrating from the downtown area, particularly in the early 20th century. Among them were Italians, Jews, Greeks, Hungarians, Armenians, Irish, Poles, and more Germans. An African American community called Bronzeville grew up just southwest of Brewer's Hill.

As years passed, many of the once extravagant homes were beginning to deteriorate. Some of the larger homes were transformed into rooming houses to accommodate the growing population. Many blocks saw the emergence of apartment buildings.

A snapshot of North 3rd Street at mid century

In 1940 the businesses reflected the ethnic salad bowl of the neighborhood and, some might argue, previewed what was to come. The following table summarizes the businesses that operated on North 3rd Street (today's Martin Luther King Drive) between Walnut Street and Lloyd Street at the height of the Great Depression. An unusually high concentration of shops focused on home décor and improvements (no matter how modest), and appeared to foreshadow the later preservationist movement that would transform the neighborhood. (Also see the notes following the chart.)

Businesses on North 3rd Street in 1940

Enterprises focused on home décor

Enterprises focused on home improvement

<i>Addresses on N. 3rd St. in 1940</i>	<i>Names of businesses and organizations in Milwaukee City Directory</i>
1703	Norand A. LaPorte Filling Station
1708	Frank M. Scherrer Manufacturing Agent Erwin J. Stumpf Manufacturing Agent
1710	Modern Printing Company
1711-13	Reliable Furniture Company
1715	George H. Schauer Second Hand Furniture Company
1716	Franke Bakery
1717	Western Plumbing Supplies
1721	Kneisel Meat Market
1724	Joseph Katz Tailor
1725	Harcher Manashian Tavern
1727	Louis Gorbis Second Hand Furniture
1728	Arrow Express and Storage
1731	Paul F. Winkelman Tavern
1732	George Bell Coal
1735	Abraham Goldenberg Sheet Metal Works

Addresses on N. 3rd St. in 1940	Names of businesses and organizations in Milwaukee City Directory
1736	William J. Schmidt Second Hand Furniture
1737	Andy's Radio Mart
1739	Benjamin H. Kendall Tailor
1740	Mrs. Sadie Horwitz Grocery
1743	Stanley Kotecki Barber
1744	Abe Lieberman Tavern
1745	Mrs. Minnie Kreiter Tavern
1746	Roland Supply Company House Furnishings
1750	Leonel Sanchez Grocery
1751	Mohns Brothers Company Paint & Wallpaper Passonno-Hutcheon Company Paints
1801	Alf Sczepanski Tavern
1803	Germania Club Inc
1804	Joseph Ringelsen Jr. Plumbing
1805	James Solon Barber
1806	Adolph H. Geisel Tavern
1807	Wilde & Company Real Estate
1810	Mannie's Second Hand Furniture
1813	Thomas Zingale Fruits
1815	L.R. Schmaus Plumbing Company
1819	Capitol Spa Tavern Aurthur H. Wessel Auto Repair
1820	Ashton Sales Company Wholesaler Notion
1821	Max Scholz Baker
1825	Central Rug and Furniture Company
1828	Joseph Reisman Hardware
1830	Palace Shoe Service Shop
1834	Herman C. Draeger Barber
1835	The Trane Company Heating Equipment Manufacturing
1837	Wentzel Gilch Tavern
1840	Rosenow Cartage & Express Company

<i>Addresses on N. 3rd St. in 1940</i>	<i>Names of businesses and organizations in Milwaukee City Directory</i>
1841	Mrs. Margaret H. Metz Restaurant
1844	United Construction and Roofers Company
1845	Harry Fiedler Tailor
1848	Adolph's Tavern
1849	Legoi's Standard Service Station
1901	George Zupan Tavern
1902-12	Wisconsin DeLuxe Corporation Wholesale Novelties
1907	Dollar Dress Stores
1915	Acme Second Hand Furniture Company
1918	Mrs. Helen Vidas Tavern
1919	Modern Candy Shop Manufacturers
1920	Hugo Zedler Interior Decorators Rudolph Zedler Systems Accountant
1921	American Soldier Ice Cream Bar Manufacturing Compan
1923	Milwaukee Ladder Company
1926	Fred Moy Laundry
1929	Mannie's Second Hand Furniture Store
1930	Harry Spintl Barber
1931	Leslie J. Jandrt Grocery
1936	Andy's Tavern
1937	McGraw's Restaurant
1940	Morris Parchefsky Shoe Repair
1941	International Hatters and Shoe Repairing
1943	Stanfield's Studio (Radios and Commercial Photography)
1944	Carl Fischer Barber
1945	Frank J. Moy Laundry
1947	Joseph Bursten Optomotrist
1951	Adolph E. Halse Drugs
1952	Alex Rosenberg Tavern
2000	Edward Palk Real Estate and Insurance

<i>Addresses on N. 3rd St. in 1940</i>	<i>Names of businesses and organizations in Milwaukee City Directory</i>
2001-03	Buetow's Wholesale Toys
2005	Merit Furniture
2013-19	Hiken & Karas Dry Goods
2016	Century Steel & Roofing Inc.
2018	United Sheet Metal and Furnace Works
2020	George J. Herrmann Tailor
2024	Herman Laufer Second Hand Furniture
2028	Karl R. Reihse Barber
2034	Evergreen Cemetery Office Blue Typewriter Company
2039	C. Niss & Company Furniture Inc.
2041	Style Bilt Upholstering Shop
2042	Roman W. Miotke Signs
2044	Rath Brothers Tiles
2045	R. Steindler Company Furriers Milwaukee Retail Manufacturing Furriers Association
2049	George Zettinig Tailor
2050	Patti Brothers Accordion School Chromatic and Piano Accordion School
2053	Mac's Beer Garden Tavern (Edward McGraw)

Notes from census and other records:

- As in all Milwaukee business corridors, most of the proprietors were immigrants and almost none had educations beyond 8th grade.
- In addition to the home décor and improvement businesses, this stretch of 3rd Street also had a large number of taverns (11). Nearly all of these had been “soft drink” places in 1930, when national Prohibition was still in effect.
- The taverns tended to serve the immigrant groups that had recently settled in the area. See examples below.
- Harcher Manashian, with the tavern at 1725 N. 3rd, was an Armenian immigrant. He and his wife Vartahi lived with his older brother on the street, possibly at the same address as the tavern.
- Paul F. Winkelman, with the tavern at 1731 N. 3rd, was a German immigrant. He lived at the same address as his tavern.
- Abe Lieberman, with the tavern at 1744 N. 3rd St., was the son of Russian Jewish immigrants. Abe was raised on Galena St.

- Minnie Kreiter, with the tavern at 1745 N. 3rd St., was an immigrant from Saxony (German kingdom state). She was apparently widowed from her husband Martin before 1940.
- The Sczepanski family, with the tavern at 1801 N. 3rd, were immigrants from Poland.
- Wentzel Gilch, with the tavern at 1835 N. 3rd St., was a German immigrant. He, his wife Rose, and children lived next door to the tavern.
- George Zupan, with the tavern at 1901 N. 3rd St., was a Hungarian immigrant. He lived at the same address as the tavern.
- Edward McGraw, with the beer garden at 2053 N. 3rd St., was the son of Irish immigrants.
- There was also considerable ethnic diversity in ownership of other businesses. See examples below.
- Leonel Sanchez, with the grocery store at 1750 N. 3rd St., was an immigrant from Mexico. He lived in Granville (which would later incorporate into Milwaukee and comprise most of Milwaukee's northwest side).
- James Solon, the barber at 1805 N. 3rd St., was an immigrant from Greece. He lived on Water Street in 1940.
- Thomas Zingale, with the fruit market at 1813 N. 3rd St., was an Italian immigrant. He lived on 3rd Street, probably at the same address as his market.
- Fred Moy, with the laundry at 1926 N. 3rd St., was an immigrant from China. He was a single man and lived on 14th and Wisconsin in 1940. Chinese laundries served Milwaukeeans all over the city before World War II

The time period also drew in some interesting families. Some of these families had members that went on to succeed in extraordinary ways. One example is the Uecker family. See below.

Spotlight on local family (1940s)

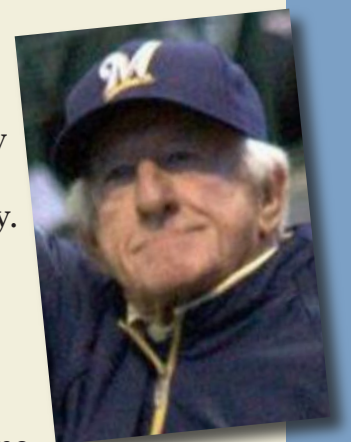
(Information from public census records)

The Ueckers

In 1940, the Uecker family lived on the corner of 3rd Street (now MLK Boulevard) and Garfield, on the boundary between today's Halyard Park and Brewer's Hill neighborhoods. The father August ("Gus") was a German-speaking immigrant from Switzerland and the mother Mary ("Sue") had been born in Michigan, apparently the daughter of Swiss immigrants. August was working as a truck driver for a construction company. Having learned the tool and die trade at an early age, he often helped support his family during the Great Depression earning \$2 to \$3 a day working on cars.

August and Mary had three children—Robert, Caroline, and Rosemary. By 1940, 6-year-old Robert ("Bob"—see right) had become an avid baseball fan, frequently riding his bike to watch the minor league Milwaukee Brewers play at nearby Borchert Field. One of his favorite players was Johnny Logan. Bob also played baseball in high school.

At age 20, Uecker enlisted in the army and played military baseball. While in service, the Boston Braves had moved to his home town and become the Milwaukee Braves. In 1956 Bob Uecker signed a major league contract with the Braves as a catcher for \$3,000. He spent his career as a lackluster back-up catcher with a .200 career batting average and a league-leading number of passed balls in 1967.



Uecker went on to use his uninspiring baseball career as material for stand-up comedy. After making repeated appearances on the Tonight Show, Johnny Carson dubbed him “Mr. Baseball.” Soon Uecker became a household word. He made dozens of TV commercials and even appeared in comedy roles in the film *Major League* and as a supporting actor in the TV series *Mr. Belevedere*. He also helped call major league games for ABC and NBC.

When the Milwaukee Braves moved to Atlanta following the 1965 season, a local businessman, Bud Selig, campaigned to bring another major league team to Milwaukee. The effort came to fruition in 1970 when the bankrupt Seattle Pilots team was purchased and moved to Milwaukee to become the Milwaukee Brewers. Selig was intent on bringing Uecker in to join a team of Brewer broadcasters. Since 1971, Bob Uecker has been “the voice of the Brewers.”

Bob Uecker has authored two books: *Catcher in the Wry* and *Catch 222*.

By late in the 20th century, many of the slowly deteriorating blocks in Brewer’s Hill were now in ruins. The nearby tanneries had begun closing after World War II because of foreign competition. Schlitz Brewery was sold to the Stroh Brewery. Without neighborhood jobs and with housing stock in decline, Brewer’s Hill was losing its population.

But things changed quickly in the 1980s. In 1981 an area block club began to drop the Sixth Ward as its neighborhood name and adopted the title of Brewer’s Hill of Sherman’s Additive as a reconciliatory name for its organization, reflecting both the historical origins of the neighborhood and its desirable topography overlooking the old brewery. The designation of Brewer’s Hill soon became associated with the neighborhood. In 1983 a group purchased the old Schlitz complex and turned it into a mixed use facility, renaming it Schlitz Park.

Very soon young adults began to rethink this neighborhood. Some of the grand homes, albeit in poor shape, could be purchased for just a few thousand dollars and rehabilitated. The preservationist movement in Brewer’s Hill caught on quickly—often with gay couples leading the way but soon followed by young families of diverse backgrounds.

Current populations (as of 2021)

Today, young professionals dominate Brewer’s Hill in just about every demographic. The leading age group is between 25 and 35. Just under 4 in 10 residents over 25 hold bachelor’s degrees, making this a very highly educated neighborhood. The leading occupations are in the fields of administration, management and business, and the neighborhood has over two times more residents in the legal professions than Milwaukee overall.

The neighborhood, like its history, is culturally and economically diverse. Culturally, over half the residents are European Americans of varying descents including German, Scottish, Polish, Dutch, English, Italian, Swedish, and more. Approximately one-third of the population is African American, and about 3 percent each are Asian and Latino (mostly Puerto Rican). The neighborhood has over 10 percent more men than women, possibly reflecting the early migration of male gay couples to the neighborhood. Economically speaking, approximately one-third of all Brewer’s Hill households are low income (with annual incomes under \$25,000) *but* about 2 in 10 households fall into the stratum of upper middle class (with annual incomes between \$75,000 and \$150,000).

While some older residents have argued that the neighborhood has gentrified, housing costs remain relatively low. The largest grouping of monthly mortgage and related costs for home owners is between \$1,000 and \$1,500. Rents are even more reasonable with 4 in 10 rental units going for \$500 to \$1,000 a month.

INTERESTING FEATURES

- **Schlitz Park** at 1555 N. Rivercenter Drive, features offices, shops, and the Brown Bottle restaurant.
- **Manpowergroup Global Focus** at 100 N. Manpower Place, is a world leader in work solutions and temporary employment.
- **United Way of Greater Milwaukee** at 225 W. Vine St. is a foundation that supports programs involving education, health, and income.

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.

SKYLINE MUSIC SERIES			
When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Early Jul. thru late Aug., Tues. 5:30	Kadish Park, south of North Ave., west of Bremen St.	A great evening of music in Riverwest, topped off with one of the most dramatic views of the city.	Free

JUNETEENTH DAY			
When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
June 19, daytime	Along Martin Luther King Dr. between Center and Burleigh Sts.	Celebration of the US holiday that commemorates the day in 1865 when the end of slavery was announced in Texas, with everything African American—the food, families, music, clothes, dance, exhibits, crafts, art, and a parade.	Free

BRONZEVILLE WEEK			
When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Aug., 2nd week	MLK Dr., between Garfield Ave. and Center St.	Cultural and arts festival, with a run/walk run, health screenings, trolley rides, arts night, poetry readings.	Free

BRONZEVILLE JAZZ IN THE HOOD			
When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Early Jul., Fri. 4-9pm	4th St. between North and Garfield	Celebration of African-American culture that focuses on local creative entrepreneurial talent with art performances.	Free

RIVERWEST SECRET GARDEN TOUR			
When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Mid Jul., Sun. 12-4pm	Garden Park, Locust and Bremen Sts.	Tour of 14 Riverwest gardens.	unk

RIVERWEST GARDENERS MARKET

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Mid-June-mid-Oct., Sun. 10am-3pm	2700 N Pierce St.	Fresh produce from Wisconsin farmers, baked goods, arts, crafts.	Free

RIVERWEST ART WALK

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Early Oct., Sat. all day	Get tickets and maps at Art Bar (722 E. Burleigh St.), Jazz Gallery (926 E. Center St.), and Riverwest Food Co-op (733 E. Clarke St.)	A walk that features artist studios, beautiful gardens, and various sanctuaries.	Free

CENTER STREET DAYS

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Early Aug., Sat. all day	Center St. between Humboldt Ave. & Holton St.	Music, food, arts, crafts, cart race, car show.	Free

ART BAR

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
3pm-2am	722 E. Burleigh St.	Permanent and temporary art exhibits.	Adults free

BRADY ST. FESTIVAL

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late Jul., Sat. 11am-12am	Brady St.	Music, food, arts, crafts.	Free

BRADY STREET PET PARADE

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
October	Brady St.	Brady Street Pet Parade.	Free

FESTIVUS ON BRADY

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Early Dec., Sat. 9:30pm-1:30am.	Brady St.	Opportunity to air grievances and participate in feats of strength to win Festivus pole, per Festivus Seinfeld episode in 1997.	Free

WALKING TOUR—BRADY STREET

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late May-mid Oct. Sat.'s 1:30pm	Meets in front of Three Holy Women Catholic Parish (St. Hedwig Church) at 1702 N. Humboldt Ave.	Tour through the neighborhood on a half-mile stroll and learn about the area's Polish and Italian roots, the counter culture of the '60s and '70s and the area's recent urban renaissance.	unk

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 2021/22 oral history of Brewer's Hill conducted by Urban Anthropology Inc.ⁱⁱ —Then

“At the time, I just looked at why the city was ignoring a neighborhood that was seven blocks from city hall. Why were they not basically enforcing the codes and assisting the property owners in cleaning it up and turning it around? I couldn't understand the mentality and the game plan, if you will, of the city of Milwaukee at that time. And in actuality, there really wasn't any game plan. They'd basically just written the neighborhood off. They may not want to say that but the people that were in power at that time, they couldn't have cared less about it. They were all concerned with renovating buildings downtown and trying to take the city in a different direction that it had been going in from the late fifties and early sixties with the leadership in place.”

“So between downtown and the university, people began to move into the east side and not everybody could afford the east side and it made the properties on just the other side of the river look interesting and both the Riverwest area and Brewer's Hill slowly began to see some in-migration of people who liked those older Victorian homes. And you could buy them very cheaply for that first decade of the eighties. You could buy homes for \$20,000 or less. Of course they would be a wreck and you would have to gut them. Brewer's Hill began to attract them.”

“It was a mixture of White, African-American and some Hispanic. I don't think there was an Asian population. The rental percentages were much higher, so you had very transitory people living here, but we also had long time home-owners that were African-American and White and Hispanic in the neighborhood, which was a positive. They had an interest in the neighborhood and they had seen a lot of the good, the bad and the ugly, and they were getting a bit tired of it. Then they wanted some changes. So it all came together pretty good.”

“Oh, Brewer's Hill was settled initially overwhelmingly by German immigrants and over the decades the original immigrants and their families maybe only stayed for two generations and then they would move out farther, out of the city. They were looking for bigger lots. The lots in Brewer's Hill are pretty small. And also of course the housing stock is older so as people got

more prosperous, they moved out to bigger homes and to places that had bigger yards and were newer neighborhoods. As the neighborhood aged the housing stock began to show signs of where the oldest houses in the neighborhood were built in the 1850s. And the vast majority of the rest of the neighborhood probably was filled up by the 1890s”

Quotes from 2021/22 oral history of Brewer’s Hill conducted by Urban Anthropology Inc. —Now

“You look at your assets and your liabilities. And my attitude was, well, the assets are that it has great proximity to downtown. It has a good housing stock, that's in deterioration, but it's there. It has a very wonderful character of the housing stock being older, 1860s through turn of the century and that's a good mix of property. It had churches in the neighborhood that were strong and were assets. Another thing was, anytime you're close to water, if you look at housing, that's an asset.”

“I got to know bankers, insurance agents, appraisers and you have to have those three parties to help turn the neighborhood around. It’s not going to do it on its own. You have to introduce the neighborhood to people that you're trying to get the money from. Then we started getting the churches somewhat involved. You started talking to people over the picket fence, if you will. I found an abandoned dog in my alley and I started walking him through the entire neighborhood. That's how I got to know a lot of people and I invited them to the neighborhood meetings.”

“Yeah. I mean, I think, we probably have a lot of business type professionals. I do think it's wide ranging in terms of the types of earnings and what people are doing in terms of a job. But, I think there is probably more of like college-educated and, or advanced degrees. I think it's probably trending more towards that way, too, just based on like the housing prices that are going for right now and, who is able to afford that.”

“I think it's very mixed. The southern half of the neighborhood probably trends toward being more well off. I think the north half, you know, you do have smaller houses, and it's a little bit denser in terms of, you know, the houses next to each other. So I think it's definitely very diverse in terms of economics.”

“It was a very poor neighborhood when I got to know it in 1980 and slowly but surely people with jobs began to move in and rehab the houses. I would say the average income has gone up steadily year by year. Most of the houses in Brewer's Hill have now been rebuilt and they are now very beautiful. There are a few beet up, dilapidated, falling apart homes still, but not too many. And I would say the average income has gone up significantly and the prices of homes have gone up dramatically. So it's actually likely now that some of the houses would sell for over \$300,000 and that would have been a funny joke 40 years ago.”

“My leisure time is spent in the garden and there's a lot of people that are in into gardening that weren't before, because I'm giving plants away all the time. People are socializing more on a smaller scale, if you will, because of COVID. But at the same time, people in the neighborhood do things somewhat together. They might go to a show together and they might go to a baseball game. Younger people under 30 and millennials seem to be do things in packs- six to eight to ten people together is not unusual. There are people that go kayaking on the river, which is two blocks away from where I live.”

PHOTOS



Todays neighborhood-Houses on Hubbard St.



Todays neighborhood-
Reservoir Ave. overlooking Commerce
St. Reservoir Ave. overlooking Commerce St.



Today's neighborhood-St Markus Evangelical Lutheran Church



Today's neighborhood-Houses on N. 1st St.

For more information on Milwaukee neighborhoods, refer to John Gurda's *Milwaukee, City of Neighborhoods*.

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

¹ Photo attribution: [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/35/Bob_Uecker_\(cropped\).jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/35/Bob_Uecker_(cropped).jpg)