

Approximate boundaries:

N-W. Good Hope Rd; S-N. Fond du Lac Ave (partially);
E-W. 76th St; W-N. Fond du Lac Ave (partially)

NORTHWEST SIDE *Menomonee River Hills*

NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION

Menomonee River Hills has a moderate to high population density. While there are a number of early 20th century Tudor style homes mainly along North 91st Street and south of West Mill Road, most of the residential housing is mid-20th century ranch style. The main business district is along North 76th Street at the eastern border of the neighborhood.

The topography of Menomonee River Hills is hilly, from gently rolling to fairly steep inclines throughout the neighborhood. Except for the major streets of West Mill Road and North 91st, no other streets follow a rectangular grid. The rest of the streets are winding and many end in dead ends or cul-de-sacs. The main public green space is Noyes Park, a 71-acre commons with a golf course, indoor pool, tennis courts and a tot lot. In addition to this green space, there is a significant amount of undeveloped wooded land west of North 91st Street and in the southeastern corner of the neighborhood south of West Bender Avenue. The Little Menomonee River runs through the latter part of the neighborhood. See photos below.

HISTORY

Over 50 neighborhoods on Milwaukee's northwest side once comprised the Granville Township in Milwaukee County, which extended from Hampton Avenue on the south to County Line Road on the north and 27th Street on the east to 124th Street on the west. Named after its river, the Milwaukee neighborhood of Menomonee River Hills was once part of Granville Township.

Early populations

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

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

But it was not these earliest settlers that established much of the culture of Granville, Township. That role belonged to a wave of Pennsylvania "Dutch" (i.e., Germans) who arrived just a few years later from Telford, Pennsylvania, including the Wambold, Leister, Scholl, Barndt, Price, Bergstresser, Borse, Klein, Martin, Huber, Groll, Horning, and Lewis families. The Pennsylvania Dutch, under the leadership of Samuel Wambold, quickly established the



German Evangelical Lutheran and Reformed Church (now known as Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church) in 1847. The following year, the church’s pastor, Wilhelm Wrede, called a meeting of local Lutheran ministers at the church. This group would later become the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. A museum of these early synod activities now stands on 107th Street (see outings).

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

Movement toward annexation

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

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

Menomonee River Hills’ specifics

The following is a sample of a few businesses that were incorporated into Menomonee River Hills at the time of annexation.

<i>Address on N. 76th St. in 1963</i>	<i>Businesses and organizations from <u>Milwaukee City Directory</u></i>
7000	Lin’s Flowerland Florists
7050	All-State Industrial Cranes
7125	E.A. Jahnke Engraving
7177	Kuphal’s Tavern

Notes:

- The site of All-State Industrial Cranes later became Monarch Metal Fabricators.
- The site of the florist company later became Halbman Landscape Service and Supplies.
- The site of Jahnke Engraving became Happy Hobby.

While scattered sections of Menomonee River Hills was settled in the early 20th century, the area later hosted a 1955 subdivision named Menomonee River Hills. The developer named the new streets after western U.S. cities including Denver Avenue, Dallas Street, Tacoma Street, Casper Street, Cheyenne Court and Street, Fresno Street, Hastings Street, Helena Court and Street, Spokane Street, and Burbank Avenue. One street that was not named after *other* cities, but was named after a Milwaukeean, was Petersik Street. See the following profile.

Menomonee River Hills profile

(Information from US Census and Carl Baehr publications)

Edward Petersik

Edward Petersik was born in 1886 in Wisconsin, the son of Bohemian immigrants Dora and Frank Petersik. He grew up in a large family on North 5th Street where his father worked locally as a tailor. The family members spoke German at home.

While Edward only attended one year of high school, he was ambitious. He began his work career as a stenographer in a music company. He left this job quickly and took a position in the City Engineer's Office, around 1911. Shortly afterwards he married Margaret Elson, born 1888, the daughter of German immigrants Matthias and Barbara Elsen. The couple purchased a home on Cramer Street where they had two children.

As part of his role at the City Engineer's Office, Edward Petersik served twice on the Street Renaming Commission—once in 1913 and once in 1923. In 1926, the City Engineer's Office was given the task of renaming streets. Petersik renamed streets for the next 30 years, although never left a record of the rationale behind his choices. Just after his retirement, Petersik Street was named for Edward in 1957.

Edward Petersik lived long after his retirement. He died in 1985 at age 99.

A new population for Granville

In the second half of the 20th century a wave of African Americans began to migrate to the neighborhood. 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 industry in the former Granville community. As in most German-dominated areas in Milwaukee, the integration of the new population proceeded relatively smoothly. Many African American families were able to purchase homes and move into the middle class.

Current populations (as of 2021)

Today there are nearly 8,500 residents in Menomonee River Hills. Of these, just over 4 in 10 are African Americans, nearly 3 in 10 are European Americans (most of mixed European ancestry), and just over 2 in 10 are Asians (nearly all of Hmong descent). There is also a scattering of Latinos (mostly of Mexican extraction), indigenous Africans, American Indians, and people of mixed or "other" racial backgrounds in the area.

The median household income in Menomonee River Hills is just over \$36,000, placing the neighborhood in the lower middle income stratum. More adult residents in Menomonee

River Hills work in production than any other field. The next most common occupations are in the fields of sales and administration. Nearly twice the number of adult residents work in social services than their proportions in other Milwaukee neighborhoods.

INTERESTING FEATURE

- **Milwaukee Sign Language School**, at 7900 W. Acadia, serving K3-8 hearing, deaf, and hard-of-hearing students.

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.

MILWAUKEE ASIAN MARKET			
When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Daily, 7am-7pm	6300 N. 76th Street	Hundreds of stalls of Asian food, clothing, toiletries, cosmetics, and other goods. (414) 760-3771	Free

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

TOUR OF MUSEUM OF WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD (WELS)			
When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
By appointment	Salem Lutheran Landmark Church, lower level, 6814 N. 107th St.	Tour of more than 1,000 artifacts and pictures of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod	Free, but donations welcome

JULY 4TH CELEBRATION			
When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
July 4th, 9am- 10pm	Noyes Park, 8235 W. Good Hope Rd.	Parade, Doll Buggy, Bike & Trike, and Coaster judging, games, fireworks.	Free

OPEN SWIM			
When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Daily, 1-5pm, holiday times vary	Noyes Park, 8235 W. Good Hope Rd.	Open swim year-round at indoor pool with diving boards, locker rooms, vending machines.	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://mecamilwaukee.com/NonFiction.html>

QUOTES FROM RESIDENTS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Quotes from an oral history of the Granville neighborhoods currently being conducted by Urban Anthropology Inc.ⁱ—About THEN.

“I’d say that we kids were much more on our own and could do what we wanted in terms of how kids are today. I have grandchildren and it seems like their lives are programmed almost 24 hours a day with activities that are organized. I mentioned the very first organized activity that I could think of was the Boy Scout troop and the little league baseball, and the 4H group. But I think, relatively speaking, that we were on our own and we were quite unsupervised compared to today. I mean I remember just being out with friends goofing around and riding bikes and exploring things in the area on our own, and that seems not to be the case today as much.”

“Families back then. There were probably more nuclear families at that time. You had mom, dad, and the children. That’s probably shifting somewhat now but that’s mainly what was in the neighborhood. Because people came and built those houses, and lived in those houses that were built.”

“In the past it was more mom and dad and kids. Now the neighborhood is moms with the kids. There are some houses that just have single people living in them. On either side of me I have two single guys living on either side. When we first moved here in the 70s, it was the mom and dad and the kids. Now it’s very diverse--younger people, people with kids, couples with kids, older people, and older couples.”

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

“I wouldn’t say there’s any normal [family type in Granville]. We have a fair amount of intergenerational homes. Mom and dad live there but grandma and grandpa live there too. I would say the biggest unifying thing is the irregular work schedules. I cannot think of a single family where either of the wage earners works nine to five. It’s hard to have a lot of family time. That’s what I see. Of the homes I visit, my stats could be skewed.”

“We are not a children-oriented area that I live in. The kids that live in the apartments around here don’t really have anything to do. No baseball, no gym, no playgrounds for them to go to.”

“I would think being it was a blue collar [area], I thought it was very pro-union up there. Today you have a mix between the young professionals and the factory guys. So it was probably quite a blend, Republican, Democrat, union, non-union, professional, you know.”

ⁱ 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.

PHOTOS



Today's neighborhood-St. Bernadette Parish

Today's neighborhood-Milwaukee Sign Language School



Today's neighborhood-
N. 84th St. & N. Burbank Ave.



Today's neighborhood-N. 80th St. & W. Acacia Ave.



Today's neighborhood-Noyes Park

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

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

Do you have great photos of this neighborhood? Are you a resident with an interesting quote about this neighborhood? Do you have recurring outings, additions, corrections, or general comments about this neighborhood? Please email your input to:
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www.urban-anthropology.org