

Approximate boundaries:

N-W. Mill Rd; S-Railroad tracks;

E-Fond du Lac Fwy; W-Little Menomonee River Pkwy

NORTHWEST SIDE *Parkway Hills*

NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION

Parkway Hills is a small neighborhood of low population density. Most of the residential housing is mid-20th century ranch style, but there are a few early 20th century Queen Anne style houses mainly on West Fond du Lac Avenue. The chief business corridors are along North 91st Street and West Fond Du Lac.

The topography of Parkway Hills is hilly with gently rolling to fairly steep inclines throughout the neighborhood. Running at a diagonal at Parkway Hills' eastern border is the main street of West Fond Du Lac, while—with the exception of North 91st—all the other streets to the south are winding. There is no public green space in Parkway Hills, but a large area in the western part of the neighborhood is undeveloped woodlands on either side of the Little Menomonee River. The river runs from the north to the southwest part of the neighborhood. See current 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. The Milwaukee neighborhood of Parkway 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



Today's neighborhood-N. 95th St & W. Langlade St.

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, ranging 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. See one family profile below.

Parkway Hills area family profile (early 20th century)

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

The Schwisters

Born in Germany in 1875, Henry Schwister immigrated to the United States sometime prior to 1900. He married Clara Johnen of an old Granville farming family in 1902 and went to work for her brother's farm. By 1910, Henry and Clara were able to invest in their own farm along today's Fond du Lac Avenue, although the property was not owned outright during Henry's lifetime. The family was one of the first to settle near the Parkway Hills area.

Henry and Clara had nine children, and possibly more. Unfortunately, Henry died relatively early at the age of 54, leaving the farm in the hands of his widow Clara and their children. While most of the older children left school and continued working for the family business, son Henry J. took a job at an auto body factory. It may have been this early experience that gave him the idea to open an auto dealership. By 1940 he owned his own establishment that would ultimately be known as Schwister Ford—becoming one of the largest Ford dealerships in Wisconsin. The dealership was apparently built on or very near the family's farmland.

Henry J. married Marie Nellen and the couple had four children. The family eventually opened a second Schwister Ford in Menomonee Falls and the family moved there. His son Eugene took over the business from his father. Henry J. died at age 89 in 1996.

Henry J.'s brother, Edwin Schwister, worked as a mechanic for Schwister Ford. He lived at 102nd and Fond du Lac just north of today's Parkway Hills' neighborhood, only a block from the dealership. He married Lorraine Wittlin and had two children. Being nearly as industrious as his brother, Edwin also opened his own liquor store on his block—Eddie's Beer and Liquor. He died at age 94 in 2008.

Neither Henry J. nor Edwin had ever attended high school.



Movement toward annexation

Economic prosperity reigned in Granville, due partially to the work ethic of these 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 week. 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.

Below are some of the businesses that were on West Fond du Lac Avenue in and near today's Parkway Hills neighborhood shortly after annexation. See notes below.

<i>Addresses on W. Fond du Lac in 1971</i>	<i>Businesses and organizations from <u>Milwaukee City Directory</u></i>
9245	J & H Auto Sales
9350	Bel Air Convalescent Center
9430	Apartments
9434	Apartments
9438	Apartments
9442	Apartments
9555	Apartments
9575	Apartments
9538	Fond View Apartments
9552	Fond View Apartments
9900	Apartments
9919	Apartments
10021	Apartments
10043	Apartments

<i>Addresses on W. Fond du Lac in 1971</i>	<i>Businesses and organizations from Milwaukee City Directory</i>
10212	North Crest Beverage Center
10212a	Ken's Auto Trims

Summary

- Some of this stretch of Fond du Lac was under development in 1971.
- The commercial places on this street reflect the growth of Milwaukee during the decade with blocks and blocks of apartment buildings.
- The Bel Air Convalescent Center site later became Wellspring of Milwaukee with 185 beds.
- Schwister Ford was owned by long-time Granville residents Henry and Gene Schwister (see profile above).

Late 20th century

In the second half of the 20th century African Americans began to migrate to Parkway Hills and other former Granville communities. 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.

Unfortunately, the deindustrialization movement that began in the 1980s arrested this course. Manufacturing employment in Milwaukee fell 77 percent, from a peak in 1963 to the present. What had been a working and middle class area on the Northwest Side was in economic decline.

Current populations (as of 2021)

Today there are just over 1,000 residents in Parkway Hills. Of these, nearly two-thirds are African Americans and over one-third European Americans (mostly people of mixed European backgrounds). There is also a scattering of Latinos (mainly of Mexican ancestry), Asians (mostly Hmong), American Indians, indigenous Africans, West Indians, Jamaicans, and people of multiple or “other” racial ancestry in the area.

The median household income for residents of Parkway Hills is just under \$29,000, placing the neighborhood in the lower middle-income stratum. The main occupations claimed by adults are in the fields of administration, healthcare support, and sales. There are over three times the number of adult residents in the field of healthcare support than the proportions in other Milwaukee neighborhoods.

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.

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

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

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

BUTLER FARMERS MARKET

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Early Jun.-mid Oct., Mon. 12-6pm	Hampton Ave. at 127th St.	Fresh produce from Wisconsin farmers, baked goods, arts, crafts, activities.	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

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 Milwaukee.”

“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 remember going to that huge Goodwill store way back in the early 70s. Even back then, everything was so well sorted and organized. I loved it. My neighbor and I used to go there in August to get new school clothes and things like lunch boxes for our kids. You could get beautiful, gently used stuff there.”

“Schwister Ford was a big thing when I was young. They advertised a lot on TV. A neighbor had this 1955 Ford Coupe that was really a nice car, and they’d gotten it at Schwister’s. I don’t remember exactly what happened to the business. I know they had one in Menomonee Falls too.”

“Well, originally it was just passing through--going to Brown Deer Road to the freeway, or highway 41 North because again, that’s the way that we went up to our cottage. And eventually they built Northridge mall. I think it was opened in [the] early 70s, so we frequently voyaged that way when we were young. And we would also go to Johnson Park. It was mini golf and that was a real iconic thing for Granville. They just took it down this year. They had a dinosaur, so I think people would remember that.”

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

“The neighborhood changed fast. I feel like half of my neighbors are new in the last four years. It feels like there was a little bit of a crime wave over in the 100’s--the triangle of Fond du Lac, Mill, and 107th St. There’s a triangle. In there is a little bit of low-income housing and gang activity. The gang is called the Wild 100s. When I moved into the neighborhood they were robbing houses and cars but that’s calmed down quite a bit.”

“For example, my neighborhood is mixed upwardly mobile white and African-American government workers. Down in the poor neighborhood in the 100s there are people from different ethnic backgrounds but probably the same socioeconomic status. Blue collar. Old cars.”

“I wanna say maybe ten years ago it started to level out as far as places shutting down and things like that. It held its own and just recently there’s been an alderwoman and she worked with UWM on a plan to try to revitalize the area. So she was able to get the city and the neighborhood to partner together.”

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-N. 95th St & W. Langlade St.



Today's neighborhood-
W. Fond Du Lac Ave. & N. Denmark St.



Today's neighborhood-
N. 95th St. & W. Lynx Ct.



Today's neighborhood-Goodwill Industries on N. 91st St.

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