

Approximate boundaries:
N-W. Brown Deer Rd; S-Railroad Tracks;
E-N. 76th St; W-N. 87th St

NORTHWEST SIDE *Servite Woods*

NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION

Servite Woods has a moderate to low population density, with housing stock dominated by multi-unit buildings, either condos or apartments. The neighborhood businesses district is along North Brown Deer Road.

The topography of Servite Woods is hilly with gently rolling to fairly steep inclines. No neighborhood streets follow a grid. North Servite Drive runs from West Brown Deer Road at the northern border of the neighborhood to West Dean Road in the southeast. Most of the other roads in the neighborhood radiate out from North Servite Drive, and many of these are private access lanes for the apartment and condo complexes. The main public green space is Servite Park Preserve, a 20-acre Milwaukee County Park with woods and hiking trails. 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. The Milwaukee neighborhood of Servite Woods was once in the Town of Granville. Servite Woods got its name from the Novitiate of the Order at Mt. St. Philip run by the Servite Fathers of Chicago that once occupied the area.

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



Today's neighborhood-
Servite Park Preserve

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.

Servite Woods specifics

The Servite Woods area was once home to a monastery. In 1892 a novitiate was opened, which included the community and a five-story limestone monastery named Mt. St. Philips. The novitiate served the convents in the dioceses of Milwaukee, Chicago, St. Louis, and Denver. Operating under the direction of the Servite Order--one of the five original mendicant orders of the Catholic Church--the novitiate functioned as a period of trial and preparation for novices to enter a religious order of brothers, sister, or monks. A number of noted spiritual leaders had their roots in this novitiate including a revered healing priest. See his profile below.

Servite Woods profile

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

Father Peter Mary Rookey, OSM

Father Rookey was born in 1917 in Superior, Wisconsin. He entered the Servite Order at Mater Dolorosa Seminary in Hillside, Illinois in 1930.

At age 17 he joined the novitiate in Granville. There he became the assistant master of novitiates at Mt. St. Philips.

Father Rookey went on to become known for his healing gifts. His first healing occurred in Ireland in 1948. In 1987, he founded the International Compassion Ministry, based in Chicago. Later he traveled the world in healing missions. He was often quoted as saying he wished other priests would consider the healing calling, but he believed many were afraid some would not be healed.

Father Peter Rookey died in 2014.



The Mt. St. Philips monastery remained in the Servite Woods area until well through the 1950s. During these years only a handful of families settled in the vicinity. One of these came from a prominent Milwaukee lineage. See this family profile below.

Servite Woods profile

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

The Cudahy family

Sometime between 1935 and 1940, the Cudahy's moved to a large parcel of land at 87th and Brown Deer Road, in today's Servite Woods neighborhood. The family's house was valued at \$35,000 in 1940, at a time when the median home assessment was just over \$1,300.

John Clarence Cudahy, born 1887, was the son of meat processing tycoon Patrick Cudahy and his wife Anna (*see John's photo from public records at Ancestry.com*). He graduated from Harvard University in 1910 and University of Wisconsin Law School in 1913. Just after graduation, John Clarence enlisted in the U.S. Army where he served as a lieutenant in the 339th Infantry Regiment during World War One.

John's wife, Katharyn, born 1888, was the daughter of sporting goods merchant Harrison Reed, and his wife Mary. The Cudahy couple had children Patrick, Michael, and Toulgas. The Cudahy's had previously owned expensive homes on Milwaukee's East Side—on Terrace Avenue and Ogden Avenue—where John worked as a real estate developer. Later, John was appointed the U.S. Ambassador to Poland, and the family maintained a residence in Warsaw during the early 1930s. John had also served as the U.S. minister to Luxembourg and the Irish Free State. At the time that the Cudahy's lived in the Servite Woods area, John was serving as the U.S. Ambassador to Belgium.

John died in 1943. Katharyn remained in the Servite Woods home until the time of her death in 1980.

After his parents' death, son Michael J. Cudahy assumed responsibility for the Servite Woods estate. Despite being a high school dropout, Michael went on to greatness himself. He co-founded Marquette Electronics. When he sold out to General Electric in 1998, he made \$153 million. Since then, he followed a path of giving his wealth away, donating \$90 million through his foundations. The funds have been used to create art centers, museums, cultural organizations, youth programs, and schools.



Movement toward annexation of Granville

In 1956 the residents and property owners of Granville Township 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 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.

A new population arrives

In the second half of the 20th century African Americans began to migrate to the former Granville 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 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.

However, the loss of many city-wide industries during the deindustrialization era and the closing of the Northridge Shopping Center during the last three decades has clearly slowed this progress.

Current populations (as of 2021)

Today there are just over 1,200 residents living in Servite Woods. Of these, slightly over three-quarters are African Americans and slightly under one-quarter are European Americans (mostly of mixed European ancestry) in the area. There is also a scattering of Asians (nearly all Hmong) and Latinos (most of Mexican and Dominican extraction).

The median household income in Servite Woods is just over \$41,000, placing the neighborhood in the lower middle-income stratum. The main occupations claimed by adult residents are in the fields of administration, production, management, and transportation.

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

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.

“We were one of the first houses that were built on North 86th Street. We are directly west of the old Northridge Shopping Center. At the time we moved here it was a relatively new shopping center but as far as our street, it was pretty much the first

house here. It was a gravel road and behind our house, the land was owned by Michael Cudahy and he had a house there and it was his land. Behind us there was this big line of trees, some fields, and some woods back there.”

“[When we came here] it was very welcoming. We felt very safe. You did not feel like there could be any issues with the neighborhood. Even though Northridge was pretty thriving in the area where I live, Servite Drive was busy but not like it’s busy today.”

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

“I like to swim, ride my bicycle, we have a little park that we can walk around on Servite Drive.”

“To me the biggest groups that really tried to make an impact was the Business Improvement District and the Chamber of Commerce. Other than that, Risen Savior Lutheran has always been up there trying to make a difference. Large retirement communities have always tried to be those huge footholds and tried to make a difference up there to keep the place viable. And a handful of small businesses like Minors and ours and some of the car dealers. We’re the anchors up there for that community.”

“The northwest side of Milwaukee is the biggest part of Milwaukee. It has the most people paying taxes and all of that stuff. But we don’t get the attention we deserve.”

“Once the area went down, the city just ignored it and didn’t do a lot to stem the tide of the downward spiral that happened. They didn’t put a lot of resources in the area. So, this new charrette that they are working on is really a big step in bringing the area back again.”

“I definitely think of the riots last summer or two summers ago in Sherman Park. Even though they weren’t necessarily in the Granville neighborhood they definitely impacted my neighborhood and even my students. We have kids from Sherman Park who come to my school. And that impacted how they see their city.”

¹ 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. Servite Drive looking north to
W. Brown Deer Rd.



Today's neighborhood-Houses/apartments on N. Servite Dr.



Today's neighborhood-
Servite Park Preserve



Today's neighborhood-
Servite Park Preserve (2)



Today's neighborhood-
The view from N. Servite Dr.
looking southeast

Today's neighborhood-The view from N. Servite Dr. looking northwest to N. Brown Deer Rd.



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