

**Approximate boundaries:**

**N**-W. Morgan Ave; **S**-W. Howard Ave;

**E**-S. 20<sup>th</sup> St; **W**-S. 35<sup>th</sup> St

# SOUTH SIDE *South Point*

## NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION

The housing type varies: East of 25th Street the style is mainly mid-20th century suburban ranch, while newer condos and apartment buildings dominate the area south of Loomis Road, and older bungalows and 1950s-styled homes dominate the area north of Loomis Road.

South 27th Street is a major business district with strip malls and fast-food restaurants. See neighborhood photos below.

## HISTORY

Much of the Southpoint neighborhood was once part of the Town of Lake, which existed as an independent township from 1838, when it was created by the legislature of Wisconsin Territory, to 1954, when it was annexed by the City of Milwaukee.

### Early populations

For most of its early history the Southpoint neighborhood was known for its “country” (almost retreat-like) atmosphere. Its earliest known settlers were farmers and the majority were German. A Swiss immigrant, Jacob Nunnemacher, built his “country home” on today’s South 27th Street near Wilber in the 1860s. The home, later purchased by the City of Milwaukee as a historic site (see photo), was a cream city brick Italianate mansion. Nunnemacher had come to Milwaukee in 1842 and amassed a fortune through distilling liquors and real estate investment. He developed the Nunnemacher Distillery in the Town of Lake in 1856.

Jacob Nunnemacher died at his country estate in 1876, about the time that a new population was arriving in the Southpoint area—the Poles. The immigrant Poles had settled in the area known today as the Old or Historic South Side, just north of Southpoint, and slowly migrated south between the late 19th century to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Even though the area’s population increased, Southpoint retained its retreat aura for many decades.

### *South 27th Street*

Southpoint residents were strongly influenced by developments along South 27th Street. In the early 20th century, the United States government began building Highway 41 that extended from Miami, Florida to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. In Wisconsin, US-41 ran north/south along the eastern edge of the state, which in Milwaukee included South 27th Street and Layton Boulevard. It became a direct route to Chicago.

Development would follow, but not for a number of years. Below is a snapshot of businesses on 27th in the general Southpoint area in 1935. See the summary notes following the chart.



Today's neighborhood-  
Jacob Nunnemacher house

<i>Addresses on S. 27th St.</i>	<i>Name of business or organization from the Milwaukee City Directory</i>
Between Euclid and Morgan	
	Glen Eakle Practice Golf Course
	John Lewandowski Gardener
	Frank G. Gray Dairy Products
Between Morgan and Loomis	
	Pure Honey Stand
	Henry D. Strothenke Gardener
Between Loomis and Howard	
	Evergreen Tourist Camp and Tavern
	Tourist Service Station
Howard-south	
	Frank Solinter Pickle Manufacturer
	Arlington Cemetery

#### **Notes from census and other public records:**

- Names of residents on this street were generally Polish and German, as were most business proprietors.
- As in most Milwaukee neighborhoods prior to 1970, most shopkeepers did not have high school educations.
- Most of the businesses reflect the rural and sanctuary aura of the area.
- Glen Eakle with the practice golf course was from Illinois, and apparently never took up residence in Wisconsin. Perhaps his goal was to attract the business of travelers between Chicago and Milwaukee.
- John Lewandowski was a Polish immigrant who may have been a tin peddler before migrating to Southpoint area and buying farmland.
- Frank Gray, with the dairy products business, moved his small operation west to Greenfield just before World War II.
- Henry D. Strothenke, the gardener, was the son of Prussian immigrants. His father was Henry H. Strothenke, who owned the farm at this location before Henry. Henry H. was listed as a "cattle trader" in the 1880 census.
- No information was found on the pickle factory or Frank Solinter.

The retreat atmosphere of the Southpoint area would change dramatically after World War II. Soldiers returning from overseas would spark a housing boom and Southpoint's population would soar. Businesses grew along South 27th Street.

The greatest change on 27th Street would be a development built just north of Southpoint's boundaries. This was the Southgate Shopping Mall, opened in 1951. Southgate was Milwaukee's first modern shopping center, operating a full generation before Brookfield Square, Northridge or Southridge. It was constructed on a 31-acre farmland parcel in the 3000 block of South 27th. The mall's arrival was a turning point in Milwaukee history that has influenced local shopping habits ever since. When Southgate opened, it immediately challenged the old shopping districts of Mitchell Street, Wisconsin Avenue, and even Lincoln Avenue. The center allowed its visitors to park free of charge, walk a short distance to the sidewalk, and visit all of its stores without moving the car once. Every store featured a sidewalk loading area, permitting customers to drive right up to the front door and pick up their purchases. The same could not be said in the old, congested neighborhoods, where most department stores were not able to provide off- street parking.

The center brought thousands of daily visitors and automobiles to South 27th Street and the Southgate and Southpoint neighborhoods. The Jacob Nunnemacher house became the Wildenberg's Evergreen Hotel, Bar and Mobile Home Park. The sanctuary aura was gone.

### **Current populations (as of 2021)**

Southpoint has nearly 3,200 residents. Today's population is more diverse than it was in its earlier times. European Americans still make up the majority, with slightly over 2 in 10 residents claiming German ancestry and slightly under 2 in 10 claiming Polish ancestry. Over 3 in 10 are Latinos and nearly 1 in 10 African Americans. Approximately two-thirds of the neighborhood population lives in households that fall into the low-income category (with annual incomes under \$25,000) or lower middle-class (with annual incomes between \$25,000 and \$50,000). However, the residents are relatively well educated. A substantially higher number of Southpoint residents hold bachelor's degrees than in Milwaukee overall. The most common occupations of residents are in the fields of administration, food service, or sales.

Most residents are renters. About 6 in 10 of the property units in Southpoint are likely to be rented. And rents are low. Nearly one-fifth of the properties can be rented for under \$500 a month and nearly all the rest go for between \$500 and \$1,000.

While South 27th Street is still a busy commercial corridor, the Southgate mall is no longer in operation. As newer malls opened all over Milwaukee, Southgate gradually lost businesses. By 1999, Southgate was more than half demolished and within the next few years, the mall vanished. Marcus Southgate Cinema remains in operation nearby at 3320 S. 30th Street.

### **INTERESTING FEATURES**

- **Jacob Nunnemacher house** at 3724 S. 27th St., a historic building that later became Wildenberg's Evergreen Hotel, Bar and Mobile Home Park.
- **South 27th Street Business Improvement District**, a collaborative BID between Milwaukee and Greenfield, that works to improve the business environment on S. 27th St.

## 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.

### MOVIES AT SOUTHGATE CINEMA

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Daily	3320 S. 30th St.	Popular movies at a Marcus Theater.	unk

### TOUR OF FOREST HOME CEMETERY

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Daily 8am- 4:30pm	2405 W. Forest Home	Tour the beautiful Chapel Gardens, Landmark Chapel, and the Hall of History that tells the story of Milwaukee dignitaries, including European founders of Milwaukee, several mayors, major African American activists, and brewery tycoons	Free

### JULY 4TH CELEBRATION

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
July 4th, 9am-10pm	Wilson Park, 1601 W. Howard Ave.	Parade, Doll Buggy, Bike & Trike, and Coaster judging, music, games, fireworks.	Free

### MILWAUKEE FIRE MUSEUM

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
1st Sun. of each month, 1-4pm, (except holidays)	1516 W. Oklahoma Ave.	Opportunity to see exhibits and artifacts of the Milwaukee Fire Department back to the 1800s; stories of history of Department and fires.	Free

### UMOS MEXICAN INDEPENDENCE DAY PARADE

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Mid Sep., Sun. 10am- 12pm	Starts at 20th & Oklahoma Ave.	Southside parade of arts, floats, local organizations honoring Mexican Independence Day.	Free

### SLEDDING

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Winter, daytime	Wilson Recreation, 4001 S. 20th St.	Sledding hills for family and friends.	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>



## PHOTOS



Todays neighborhood-  
Condos on S. Miner Street



Todays neighborhood-S. 27th Street



Todays neighborhood-  
Houses on 32nd Street & St. Francis Avenue



Today's neighborhood-Houses on S. 25th St & Wilbur Ave.

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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