

Approximate boundaries:
N-W. Hampton Ave; S-W. Congress St;
E-N. 68th St; W-Wisconsin Hwy 175

NORTHWEST SIDE *Columbus Park*

NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION

Columbus Park is a densely populated neighborhood with a variety of housing styles. There is a mixture of Cape Cod, Colonial, ranch, and Tudor style homes as well as bungalows built in the 1920s and 1930s. A mainly flat area with a few gently rolling hills, the streets of Columbus Park follow a rectangular grid pattern with the exception of West Appleton Avenue that runs at a diagonal from West Hampton to West Congress Street. The neighborhood's main business district is along West Appleton Avenue, but there are also a number of businesses concentrated around North 76th Street and West Hampton.

The main public green space is Indigenous Peoples' Park. With 10 acres, the commons has a tot lot, little league baseball diamonds, winter sledding areas, and a summer wading pool.

HISTORY

The Columbus Park neighborhood was named after the former name of Indigenous Peoples' Park, Columbus Park.

Early populations

Today's neighborhood-
Houses at 70th & Hampton



The area that today is the Columbus Park neighborhood was once the northern tip of the unincorporated, rural Town of Wauwatosa. According to an 1855 map, the boundaries of the Town of Wauwatosa were Greenfield to the south, Hampton to the north, 27th Street to the east, and 127th Street to the west. Most of the Town of Wauwatosa settlers were migrants from its eastern neighbor, Milwaukee, or its northern neighborhood, Granville, and most of these were Germans. The City of Milwaukee would later annex much of the Town of Wauwatosa. By the middle of the 1920s, the Columbus Park area was in Milwaukee.

The Columbus Park area had originally shared its northern border with Granville Township. Granville—which also later consolidated with Milwaukee—had attracted several waves of German immigrants between the mid-1800s and early 1900s. These included a wave of Pennsylvania “Dutch” (actually Germans) who arrived from Telford, Pennsylvania in the 1840s, and German Russians who had left Germany for Russia's Volga River area in the late 1700s and later immigrated to America and Wisconsin between 1910 and 1920. Parts of this German population would spill over to the Columbus Park area in later generations.

By 1940, there were sparse settlements of residents on the streets within the Columbus Park boundaries. There were fewer than 70 residences on the neighborhood blocks, and most of these were on Appleton, Medford, and Hampton. Virtually all had German names. Below is the profile of one of the neighborhood families, randomly selected from the 1940 Milwaukee City Directory.

Columbus Park random family

*Name selected randomly from the 1940 City Directory in the Columbus Park area
(other information found in census records)*

The Berenz

Sometime in the 1930s, Richard and Adela Berenz moved from North 14th Street in Milwaukee's old 1st Ward to 6935 W. Medford in today's Columbus Park neighborhood. Richard, the son of a German immigrant father, worked as a motorcycle assembler, probably at Harley Davidson (see photo). Adela, the daughter of parents born in Wisconsin, worked as a cashier for a newspaper.

While little information was found on Adela, much was found on Richard. Unlike most Milwaukeeans of the time, he was not a

Milwaukee native. Born in 1896, he had been raised as one of six children on a farm in Marshfield in Fond du Lac County. His parents owned the farm outright. Richard served in World War One, rank unknown.

Most of the Berenz children scattered after Richard's father died in 1927. The oldest sibling, unmarried Anna Berenz, stayed behind with mother Mary. No doubt sons Richard, Mattias, Joseph and Andrew

helped contribute to the support of sister Anna who died at 83 and mother Mary who died at 100. Joseph, Mattias, and Andrew remained in Marshfield--Andrew working as a blacksmith, Mattias as a carpenter, and Joseph driving a beer truck and eventually owning his own tavern.

It is not known if Richard and Adela ever had children. The couple eventually retired in Florida, and both lived to be 90. Richard died in 1987 and Adela in 1992.



Businesses

In 1940 there were only seven businesses in the Columbus Park neighborhood. Four of these were on Hampton. Along with Appleton, Hampton Avenue would grow to become one of the major business corridors in the neighborhood. Hampton was named by Festus Stone in 1888 during the development of a subdivision on today's far north side. Stone apparently saw strong marketing potential for the street and named it after Hampton, England, located at the edge of London.

The following chart lists the businesses that were on Hampton Avenue within the Columbus Park boundaries in 1940. See summary and notes below.

Addresses on W. Hampton Ave. in Columbus Park in 1940	Names of businesses, offices, apartments, and organizations from the <u>Milwaukee City Directory</u>
6810	Michael J. Etzel Carpet Contractor
6812	Mrs. Irene M. Craig Groceries
6907	Joseph Guschl Contractor
7012	Fred G. Gross Carpet Contractor

Summary notes from the U.S. Census and other records:

- Three of the four businesses on this stretch of Hampton were contracting firms, perhaps foretelling the area growth that would follow.
- Technically only two of the businesses were in the Columbus Park neighborhood—those on the south side of the street.
- As in most Milwaukee neighborhoods prior to 1970, the shopkeepers had not attended high school.
- Michael J. Etzel, the carpet contractor, had completed the 8th grade. He was the son of a German immigrant.
- Irene M. Craig, with the grocery store, was the daughter of German immigrants. No information was found on her schooling.
- Joseph Guschl, the contractor, was an immigrant from Austria. He had completed the 8th grade.
- Fred G. Gross, the carpet contractor/carpenter, was the grandson of German immigrants. He told the census taker in 1940 that he had never attended school

By the early 1960s, Milwaukee’s growing Northwest Side was attracting its own newspapers. One of these was *The Northwest News*, published by Ed Bristol Advertising, with offices on 76th and Hampton Avenue. The editor of the newspaper was Manny Meyers, the one-time campaign manager of Mayor Frank Zeidler. The biweekly newspaper operated between 1961 and 1966, with at least one brief reincarnation.

During these years, people of color began to migrate to the area. African Americans arrived for two reasons: (1) available industrial jobs on the Northwest Side and the area that had been Granville, and (2) the need for housing following the leveling of their former central city home known as Bronzeville (see [Halyard Park neighborhood](#) for details). As in most Milwaukee neighborhoods where Germans dominated, the integration was relatively peaceful. Many African Americans were able to obtain family-supporting jobs and purchase homes.

However, just as soon as the black population had settled in large numbers, they were faced with the long deindustrialization movement, beginning in the 1980s. 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 decline.

Current populations (as of 2017)

Today, Columbus Park has just over 4,000 residents. The median household income is just over \$43,000 annually, placing the neighborhood in the lower middle income stratum. The largest number of jobs claimed by residents are in the fields of administration, production, and sales. About 11 percent each of the residents work in non-profits or local government.

Over the decades, most of the German population left Columbus Park. Just under 350 people claim German ancestry in the area today. Nearly 7 in 10 residents are African Americans, approximately 1 in 5 are European Americans (most with mixed European ancestry), about 1 in 12 are Asians (all of Hmong/Lao or Vietnamese descent), and 1 in 14 are Latinos (mostly of Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Central American ancestry). The rest are indigenous Africans, people from the East Indies and Jamaica, and residents of multiple backgrounds.

INTERESTING FEATURES

- **Nigerian Community in Milwaukee**, at 8310 W. Appleton Ave, a long-term center for Nigerian students and educators.
- **Indigenous Peoples' Park**, at 7301 W. Courtland, a large commons with summer music events, winter sledding, and little league baseball diamonds.

RECURRING NEARBY OUTINGS

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.

TRAVELING TUNES CONCERT IN COLUMBUS PARK

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Mid July, Th, 6:30pm	Indigenous Peoples' Park, 7301 W. Courtland Ave.	Local band hosted by Milwaukee County Parks Department (check their website for changes)	Free

SLEDDING--COLUMBUS

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Winter, daytime	Indigenous Peoples' Park, 7301 W. Courtland Ave.	Sledding hills for family and friends.	Free

JULY 4TH CELEBRATION

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
July 4th, 9am-12:30pm	Sherman Park, 3000 N. Sherman Blvd.	Parade, Doll Buggy, Bike & Trike, and Coaster judging, games.	Free

FREE FAMILY SWIM—WASHINGTON HS

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Tue.'s 6:00-6:55pm females; 7:00-7:55pm males	Washington H.S., 2525 N. Sherman Blvd., enter main gym door on Sherman Blvd.	Indoor swimming with swim caps available for purchase (children 7 and under must be accompanied by adult). 875-6025.	Free

These outings are provided courtesy of MECAH Publishing.

QUOTES FROM RESIDENTS

“I worked for the old Northwest News back in the day as a graphic artist. I started in my teens and left in my mid-twenties. The paper was 51 percent owned by Ed Bristol and 49 percent owned by Manny Meyers. This ‘odd couple’ could not have been more different. Although both were Jewish, Ed was a neat-freak and a dedicated family man. Manny had never married and would come to work wearing a rumpled suit with a jacket that almost matched the trousers and two different colored socks. Ed was a capitalist and a conservative Republican and Manny had been Mayor Frank Zeidler’s campaign manager. He was about as far left of center as was possible. I always remember what we termed the ‘Friday night fights.’ Manny would come to Ed’s office with his list of stories and the battles began. They were always about ad content versus editorial content and which took precedence. Eventually the two sold the newspaper, but Manny bought it back a few years later. I made the decision to go with Manny then. I once asked him how in the world he and Ed Bristol had ever gotten together. He said he wanted to start a newspaper on the Northwest Side and needed to partner with an advertising agency. He said he went to the Yellow Pages and looked at names. When he saw the name of Ed Bristol Advertising, he thought this partnership could have a good ring to it—Bristol Meyers.”

--Jill Florence Lackey

If you are a resident in Lindsay Park and wish to make an interesting observation about this neighborhood, please send your quote to JFLanthropologist@currently.com

PHOTOS



Today's neighborhood-Businesses at 76th & Hampton



Today's neighborhood-
Houses at 70th & Hampton



Today's neighborhood-
Houses at W. Beckett Ave
& W. Glendale Ave



Today's neighborhood-
House at 79th & Beckett Ave.



Today's neighborhood-Houses at W. Beckett Ave & W. Glendale Ave

ⁱ Photo attribution: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/4d/Harley_Davidson_Motor_Company_The_Implement_Age_v16.jpg

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