

Approximate boundaries:
N-W. Burleigh St; S-W. Center St;
E-N. 76th St; W-N. 89th St

NORTHWEST SIDE *Cooper Park*

NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION

Cooper Park is almost entirely residential with a few businesses along Burleigh Street. Most of the homes in the eastern part of the neighborhood are Tudor style with brick or stone facades. The houses in the western section around the park are mainly one-story wood-frame Cape Cods.

The park named Cooper Park is an 8.4-acre county commons with two softball diamonds, a wading pool, and a pavilion. See neighborhood photos below.

HISTORY

Cooper Park is a very young neighborhood.

Early population

Cooper Park developed after Enderis Park to the east. While neighboring Enderis Park was filling up in the 1920s and 1930s, only Cooper Park's northern boundary (Burleigh Street) and its southern boundary (Center Street) were attracting residents or businesses during this time. The central streets of Chambers and Locust had no settlers until the mid-1940s.

However, the neighborhood did become the recipient of its single park—Cooper Park—in the mid-1930s. During the Great Depression thousands of Milwaukeeans earned their living from federal relief programs--the largest of which was the WPA. Federal relief guidelines favored projects that gave jobs to the largest number of men for extended periods of time, and this often entailed development of parks. Conveniently, Milwaukee County Park officials had literally drawers full of detailed plans for development when supplies and able-bodied men were sent their way. Some park sites were acquired from bankrupt developers. One of these was Cooper Park, which got transformed from tax-delinquent property to a neighborhood park in a short period of time. But home building in the Cooper Park neighborhood during the Great Depression and World War II came to a virtual standstill. It was not until 1947 that Locust Street had one household, and Chambers had two at the neighborhood's western edge.

Burleigh Street

Burleigh Street in Cooper Park borders today's Kops Park neighborhood. Below is a snapshot of the sparse commercial properties on this street in 1949 and a randomly selected resident on Burleigh from the same year. See below.



<i>Addresses on W. Burleigh in 1949</i>	<i>Businesses, offices, or apartments from the Milwaukee City Directory</i>
7921	Harry H. Wechlo Tavern
8011	Apartments
8309	Apartments
8310	Emil F. Stabelfedt Florist
8329	Kalt Corporation Real Estate & Builders
8505	Apartments
8520	Apartments

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

- The newer apartment buildings on Burleigh and the presence of a real estate and building firm in 1949 were precursors of a neighborhood preparing to grow.
- Harry W. Wechlo, with the tavern, had been at that location since the 1930s, when, because of Prohibition laws, his place was permitted as a "soft drink" parlor. Harry was the grandson of German immigrants. He'd been a teamster driver before putting out his shingle.
- Emil Stabelfedt, the florist, had left high school after his first year. He'd owned a farm in Wauwatosa before starting his business. His mother was a Pomeranian immigrant from Germany.

Cooper Park Random Resident (1940s)

Name selected randomly from the 1949 City Directory in the Cooper Park area on Burleigh (photo and other information found in public records on Ancestry.com)

Berton Marvin Rosenberg

Berton was a 26-year-old young man, recently out of college, who was living in a relatively new apartment building at 8505 West Burleigh in 1949. He was the son of Jewish parents, George and Dorothy (nee Abrams) Rosenthal, who had emigrated from Lithuania. Berton had two older brothers, Lionel and Norman.

The family had lived in Chicago (where Berton was born) before moving to Wisconsin. By 1940 the Rosenthals had moved to Wauwatosa. Berton graduated from Washington High School in the Sherman Park area in 1941 (see photo from the yearbook) and went on to attend and graduate from the University of Wisconsin in Madison. At Madison he was the treasurer of the prestigious Hesperia, a debating and discussion society.



A number of Jewish residents were living near Berton in Cooper's Park in 1949 on Burleigh between 81st and 85th Streets. Most were renters. No later information was found on Berton's occupation or family. However, city directories show that he was living in Mequon during the 1990s.

Change would come to Cooper Park during the 1950s at the height of the post-World War II economy and housing boom. By 1955, Locust had 25 households, and Chambers had 15 households and one business. Most of the residents were Germans or Jews with ancestry in Central or Eastern Europe.

Current populations (as of 2021)

The Cooper Park neighborhood today is slightly more diverse than it was in the 1950s. Over 8 in 10 residents are still white, with about half claiming ancestry in Germany—the rest mostly Polish or Irish. There is no evidence of a Jewish population there today. A little over 1 in 8 residents are African Americans. The rest are people of multiple backgrounds, Asians, and Latinos (mostly with Central America ancestry).

Over one-third of the residents live in upper middle-income households, with annual incomes of \$75,001 to \$150,000. Most of the rest live in middle-income households, and a few live in low income-households. Cooper Park is a highly educated neighborhood, with nearly half of the residents holding bachelor's or graduate degrees. The highest number of occupations in the neighborhood are in the fields of administration, healthcare, and management.

Home ownership is also high in Cooper Park. Over three-quarters of the property units are owner occupied, and over half the select monthly costs (e.g., mortgages, taxes, deeds of trust, insurance, contracts to purchase) are in the range of \$1,001 to \$2,000. Rents are modest, with over 90 percent going for \$501 to \$1,000. Cooper Park has an active neighborhood association.

INTERESTING FEATURES

- **Cooper Park**, at 88th and Chambers, has two softball fields, a paved area, a tot lot, and restrooms.
- **Cooper Park Pavilion**, at 8701 W. Chambers St. in Cooper Park, offers a room for rent, with kitchen, range, refrigerator, air-conditioning, and tables and chairs.

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.

HALLOWEEN IN COOPER PARK			
When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late Oct., Sat. 11am-1pm	Cooper Park, 86th & Locust	Halloween celebration.	Free

JULY 4TH CELEBRATION--ENDERIS

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
July 4, 8:30-11:30am	Enderis Playfield, 2978 N. 72nd	Parade, games, music, watermelon-eating contest.	Free

These outings are provided courtesy of MECAH Publishing.

QUOTES FROM RESIDENTS

If you are a resident of Cooper Park and wish to make an interesting observation about this neighborhood, please send your quote to JFLanthropologist@sbcglobal.net

PHOTOS

Today's neighborhood-
Houses at 77th & Chambers



Today's neighborhood-Cooper Park baseball diamond



Today's neighborhood-
Houses at 85th & Locust



Today's neighborhood-Houses at 88th & Locust

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:
JFLanthropologist@sbcglobal.net



www.urban-anthropology.org