

Approximate boundaries:
N-W. Mill Rd; S-Railroad tracks;
E-W. Appleton Ave; W-Hwy 45

NORTHWEST SIDE *Florist Highlands*

NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION

Florist Highlands has low to moderate population density. In some areas large lots are widely spaced with houses set far back from the street. In other areas, such as along West Florist Avenue, the houses are closer together on smaller lots. The main housing style is mid- to late 20th century colonial. These tend to be large two-story houses. There are also some Cape Cods that date to the early to mid-20th century. The neighborhood has no business corridor.

The topography of Florist Highlands is flat to gently rolling hills. Most of the neighborhood's sparse streets follow a rectangular grid but some curve. West Appleton Avenue runs at a diagonal from east to west and defines the north border of the neighborhood. There is no public green space or park but a large area of the southern border of the neighborhood is woods and open fields. See photos.

HISTORY

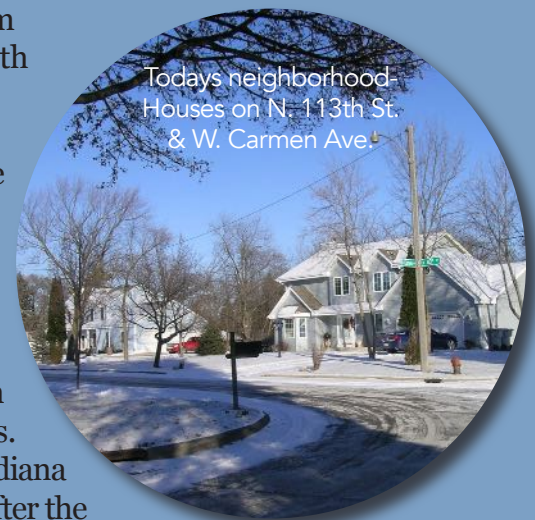
Over 50 neighborhoods on Milwaukee's northwest side once comprised the Granville Township in Milwaukee County, which extended from Hampton Avenue on the south to County Line Road on the north and 27th Street on the east to 124th Street on the west. The Milwaukee neighborhood of Florist Highlands was once part of Granville Township. The neighborhood was named after one of its streets—Florist Avenue—which in turn was named after a long-tenured greenhouse along its path.

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 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 an example of one of the early families in Granville below.

Florist Highlands family profile (early 20th century)

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

The Steldts

The Steldt family is an excellent example of the work ethic of the Granville settlers. The family moved to North 112th Street in today's Florist Highlands neighborhood sometime in the 1930s. The son of German immigrants, Oscar Steldt (born 1889 in Wisconsin) only completed the 8th grade. He took up the brick laying trade and became an independent mason contractor. While establishing his business, he married Henrietta, whose maiden name might have been Berger. Henrietta (born 1887 in Wisconsin) was also the child of German immigrants. The couple had children Harriet, Carl, Milton, and Frank. Initially, the family took up residence on Sherman Boulevard near Hope Avenue, on the border of today's Old North Milwaukee and Lincoln Creek neighborhoods. There Oscar built up his contracting enterprise.

By 1940 the Steldts had purchased an expensive home in today's Florist Highlands area. The home was valued at \$6,000, an extremely high sum for the times. In 1939, at the height of the Great Depression, Oscar reported only working 32 weeks that year. Despite the times, Henrietta and Oscar worked very hard to ensure that their children were well provided for.

Daughter Henrietta married Justin Walton, a college man and World War II vet. The couple settled in Virginia. Oldest son Carl took up the banking trade and by 1940 was married and living in a nearby expensive home in Granville. Son Milton graduated from college and became a school teacher. Son Frank also graduated from college and became a research chemist.

Unfortunately, Oscar preceded his wife in death by over a decade. He died in 1958 and was buried at Wisconsin Memorial Park. Henrietta remained at their Granville home and was probably helped out by her children. Late in her life she moved to St. Paul, Minnesota where she died in 1970. Her body was returned to Wisconsin and she was buried next to her husband Oscar.

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.

Late 20th century

In the second half of the 20th century African Americans began to migrate to the Timmerman West 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 nearly 1,400 residents in Florist Highlands. Of these, approximately half are European Americans (the largest ancestry group still being German and people of mixed European backgrounds). A little over one-third of neighborhood residents are African Americans and just over 1 in 20 are Asians (nearly all of Hmong descent). The rest are Latinos (mostly of Mexican and Puerto Rican extraction) and people of multiple racial backgrounds.

The median household income for residents of Florist Highlands is just over \$40,000, placing the neighborhood in the lower middle-income stratum. The main occupations claimed by adults are in the fields of administration, facilities, healthcare support, and sales. The neighborhood has a large number of workers in family businesses and who are self-employed, relative to Milwaukee generally.

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

These outings are provided courtesy of MECAH Publishing.

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.

“It was a farming community. Older Caucasian types lived out there originally. And then over time with the types of housing there was the bus lines. There’s lots of nursing homes up there. The ethnic community worked in the nursing homes. So, I think the north side developed over time now. It’s gone from the older farm Caucasian types now to multicultural up there. I think there’s a wide range in variety of people up there.”

“And the concept in the day, this might have been the late 80s or early 90s, I can’t remember. The concept was that if you build--if you move people who don’t have jobs and you move them to where the jobs were, eventually they are going to assimilate. It would take them a matter of days and they were all [of] the sudden gonna be middle class and everything [is] going to be better so we can erase all of our issues by moving our poor folks over to the jobs. During that period between 1975 and 1990, the city built now what they call the Land Bank. It’s the manufacturing area off Bradley Road, Calumet Road, and Good Hope Road on 60th to 95th [further]. There’s like 75 to 80 manufacturers. And they developed this area for industrial use. The industrial people they came and moved out there and built nice buildings. So, the jobs all came to the north side. So, then they decided to move all the poor people out to the northwest side, and they decided to make Brewers Hill a kind of cute urban-y area. That’s the start of ‘Let’s revitalize part of downtown.’ So, they moved a bunch of people from the inner city out to 91st and Brown Deer Road. If you ever look at these condos they’re really weird. They’re square and narrow and every bedroom is on a separate floor, and the kitchen’s on a separate floor, and the living rooms on the separate floor. So, they’re not really what people would aspire to live in. So, the future of these buildings was kind of questionable when you look at the design. So where was it going to go in the future? So, they built these buildings and they moved the poor people out there.”

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

“We are a melting pot and I am proud to say that. We have black, white, Asian, Hispanic, and everything in between.”

“There are more Hmong people moving into the neighborhood. Now we have a Hispanic family that has moved into my area. It has shifted from majority white to majority black.”

“That area has changed very, very drastically, as I said, along with the development-- along with the change from the primarily rural.”

“If you go way back there was always a little bit of tension. I think it’s actually becoming better. I think society is progressing past lots of that ethnic parochialism. It used to be the Italian neighborhood, the African American neighborhood, or the Jewish community, or this is where all the Polish, Germans lived. Segregated. I think you are starting to see those barriers breaking now. And again, that doesn’t happen overnight. I think the racial walls are breaking down but you still have the social economic ones. That maybe keeps people apart. And the good jobs are what help break those walls down.”

“Many of these old Granville neighborhoods are very picturesque. It is a good place for purchasing a nice home at a decent price.”

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-
The corner of N. 114th St. & W. Bobolink Ave.



Today's neighborhood-
Houses on N. 109th St. & W. Wren Ave.

Today's neighborhood-
Houses on N. 112th St.



Today's neighborhood-Houses on N. 109th St. & W. Florist Ave.

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:
JFLanthropologist@sbcglobal.net

OLDER PHOTOS FROM RESIDENTS

Gardeners near Timmerman Airport (a nearby neighborhood). (Photos courtesy of Dennis Lukaszewski of the University Extension.)

