

Approximate boundaries:

N-W. Brown Deer Rd; **S**-N. Bradley Rd (partially);

E-N. 91st St; **W**-N. Lauer St

NORTHWEST SIDE *Granville Station*

NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION

Granville Station is a sparsely populated neighborhood that has a mix of early 20th century bungalows along with recently built houses in a development west of North 107th Street. The early 20th century bungalows are mainly along North Granville Road. The older bungalows tend to be set far back on widely spaced lots.

There are few, if any, sidewalks in the neighborhood. Most of the northern part of the Granville Station is occupied by industrial buildings. A business corridor runs along West Brown Deer Road.

Granville Station's topography is relatively hilly. There is very little residential housing east of North Granville Road. Most of the area is an undeveloped open field. The Little Menomonee River flows through this area from the southeastern part of the neighborhood to the north. A few streets follow a rectangular grid but most curve or end in cul de sacs. North Granville Road runs at a diagonal from West Bradley at the southern border to North 107th Street in the northern section of the neighborhood. The main public green space is Popuch Park, an 11-acre-commons with a tot lot and a basketball court.

Today's neighborhood-
Bungalow on N. Granville Rd.
& W. Donna Dr. looking west



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 Granville Station was once in the Town of Granville.

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 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.

The railroad tie factory

In 1921, the Moss-American Company opened at the intersection of Brown Deer and Granville Roads. At its height, the site comprised 88 acres, including a former creosote facility and six miles of the Little Menomonee River, which was adjacent to the facility. The factory preserved wood that treated railroad ties with a creosote and fuel-oil mixture. It became one of the largest employers in the area and many African Americans were drawn to work opportunities there during the early years of the Great Migration. See examples below.

Granville Station resident profile

(Information from U.S. Census records.)

John Askew and co-workers

John Askew was born in Illinois in 1883. He had married and was widowed by 1930. He made his way to Wisconsin and the Granville Station area to work at the Moss-American factory. Like many African American laborers working for Moss, he lived in a rooming house (which may have been a railroad car) on Brown Deer Road.

In 1930, John lived in a house run by an African American couple, Lonnie and Laverne Wesham, from Kentucky. Lonnie also worked in the tie factory while Laverne ran the rooming house. Among the lodgers were Monroe Morse from North Carolina, Jerry Dodson from Tennessee, John Lee from Louisiana, and Henry Smith from Kentucky. All the men were single except for Askew and Smith, who were widowed.

Things changed for John Askew as the Great Depression hit Milwaukee. By the time of the 1940 census, John was only working half time at the factory and had earned a meager \$684 during the previous 12 months. He and a full-time housekeeper were now running the rooming house. The housekeeper, Paralee Pritchard, a married woman from Alabama, was the only tenant in the house working full time. But her annual income the previous year was also the lowest--\$400. All the other tenants worked at the tie factory. Joseph Cooldwell from Arkansas, like Askew, worked half time and was earning the same wage. Daniel Annison from Indiana fared slightly better. He'd worked 22 weeks in the previous year and earned \$850. John Mayes from Tennessee worked 26 weeks but only earned \$425 for the year. Hilliard Howard also from Tennessee, worked 8 weeks and earned \$351. John McCuley from Georgia worked 12 weeks and earned \$330. And James Eury from Illinois really struggled— working only 7 weeks in the previous year and earning a paltry \$188.

The median income for Americans in 1940 was just under \$1,400. No U.S. demographic group fared worse than African Americans during these times.

Post-Depression

Economic prosperity eventually 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. 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 over 75 companies.

Movement toward annexation

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 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.

The following is a sample of some of the Granville Station businesses that were incorporated into Milwaukee just following annexation. It is noteworthy that all four of these businesses reflect the expansion of residences and businesses that would gradually move into the Granville area.

<i>Address on W. Brown Deer</i>	<i>Name of business from the <u>Milwaukee City Directory</u> in 1966</i>
9906	Geipel Certified Sod Inc. Landscape Gardeners
11000	Atlas Lumber and Supply Inc.
11122	Schuette Movers of Milwaukee Inc. Building Movers
11340	White Construction Company Asphalt Plant

A new population arrives

In the second half of the 20th century African Americans began to migrate to the neighborhood. 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. The Moss-American factory had closed in the late 1970s. It was also discovered that the plant had seriously polluted the lovely Little Menomonee River. EPA environmental studies concluded that Moss-American activities contaminated soil and ground water as well as mud on the river banks. Contaminants of concern included polychlorinated aromatic hydrocarbons and organic compounds such as benzene, ethyl benzene, toluene, and xylene. All this had negative effects on the residents of Granville Township.

Current populations (as of 2025)

Today, there are only 922 residents in Granville Station. Nearly half are European Americans, and of these, one-fifth still claim German as their first ancestry. Just over one-third are African American and about 1 in 20 each are Latinos (mainly of Mexican descent). There is also a scattering of Asians (mostly of Pakistani and Chinese descent), and people of mixed racial or “other” racial backgrounds in the area.

Household incomes are widely distributed in Granville Station, with approximately 10 percent of the households earning between \$25,00 and \$30,000 annually and the same percent earning between \$50,00 and \$60,000 annually. The main occupations among adult residents are in the fields of administration and management.

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.

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

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. 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.¹—About THEN.

“I mean it was rural and primarily it was farmland. . . When I was five years old or five and one-half, or in kindergarten--that’s when my parents moved to a different house that was also in the town of Granville and was north of an original farmstead two miles on Granville Road--near Granville Road and Brown Deer Road. I believe the area that in fact is now referred to as Granville Station. So, we moved there, as I said, we moved there when I was about five and one-half, but I really lived there with my parents all the way through high school and college. So, I have much better memories of that area than I do [of] the original farm there on Silver Spring. I really lived in two areas of the town. But that area up near Granville, what’s referred to, I think was Granville Station, that was also very rural and almost entirely farmland when we moved there.”

“I think part of it was that we were all new to the neighborhood. We were friendly with each other and the adults were there to get to know each other. A lot more moms were home during the day. We helped each other with projects. I remember the neighbors coming over and they would help us lay our sod. And my husband would go and help other people lay their sod because we had like nothing. There wasn’t a street here or sidewalk here and everyone had to put in their own grass because it was a developing neighborhood.”

“In that Granville Station there I remember as a real young, maybe seven to eight-year-old just exploring the area. There was a well-known company there; it was called Moss American Tie Company--a tie treating facility where they did railroad ties. And that was famous actually. And the reason I say it was famous--it was actually--it is now closed but it was the source of the pollution of the Menomonee River and there was a multimillion-dollar cleanup after they cleaned the river up as a result of that facility. I remember real vaguely that they employed some African Americans. And I believe--I’m not sure about this--that they actually lived there on the site. I think there were old railroad cars, I think temporary housing. And that just kind of struck--I mean as a young kid--I mean in terms of race of course. It struck me that even though we were in kind of a poor--we were poor by today’s standard--but it struck me that people could actually be living in a shack like that where there’s nothing else. I mean, I know they worked there. I don’t have any other observations. But I know that they employed a number of African Americans in that. I also mentioned that I worked on a farm. My cousin that owned a large farm and he did employ a crew of three or four African Americans who lived in the city and they commuted to the farms. And I did work side-by-side with them for quite a few years. They did not live in the town. At the time they lived in the City of Milwaukee.”

“My earliest memory, and this will be about age five, I mentioned this tie treating facility. In the Granville Center--in the Granville Station area. Believe it or not, I believe there were four bars. There was a couple [of] gas stations, a blacksmith station, believe it or not, a canning factory, a lumber yard, and there were quite a few businesses actually. And I remember when we first got there, there weren’t a lot of grocery stores very close. We had to drive to Menomonee Falls or Hampton Avenue to go food shopping. So that’s one thing that has definitely changed. More stores are closer to the actual residents. That probably was actually how sparse the community had been when we got there.”

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

“Mostly blacks and whites as a whole. It has changed now to where there’s--mostly in the townhouses--completely all whites have left and that’s been replaced by African Americans. A lot larger Asian population. That is what I’ve see now.”

“The cultural arts festival in June. It’s the largest thing celebrating our multiculturalism. We’re working with the businesses to get them to work with the students with the schools. We’re hoping that doing that will get the kids in the neighborhood to understand the jobs in the neighborhood and then we have a more thriving neighborhood if we have the folks that live up there can actually get the jobs up there.”

“We don’t have a lot of recreational stuff up there. So really whatever people are doing, they’re not doing in Granville. The soccer fields tend to be very white suburban. We don’t have a lot of activities. I would say the golf courses are very multicultural. Otherwise, we really do not have much going on.”

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. Granville Rd. &
W. River Ridge Dr



Today's neighborhood-
N. Granville Rd. & W. Donna Dr.
looking east



Today's neighborhood-
Houses on W. Fairlane Ave.



Today's neighborhood-Popuch Park



Today's neighborhood-
N. Granville Rd. & W. Heather 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:
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www.urban-anthropology.org