

Approximate boundaries:
N-W. Olive St; S-W. Capitol Dr;
E-N. Port Washington Rd, W-N. Green Bay Ave

FAR NORTH SIDE *Grover Heights*

NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION

Grover Heights is a small neighborhood of moderate population density. The few houses that are in the neighborhood are mainly two-story, wood frame duplexes from the early 20th century and a small number of bungalows. A large section of the neighborhood between North 8th Street and North 9th Street is occupied by the I-94 freeway. Only a few houses stand between North Green Bay Avenue and the freeway. There is a modest business corridor along Green Bay.

Grover Heights' topography is mainly flat. There is no public green space in the neighborhood.

HISTORY

Grover Heights shadows the development of its larger neighbor, the Rufus King neighborhood.

Early populations

Like in Rufus King, most of the earliest settlers in the Grover Heights area were Germans. In 1835, the Town of Milwaukee (not to be confused with the City of Milwaukee) was created, which included today's Grover Heights' neighborhood. The boundaries of the Town of Milwaukee stretched from today's Greenfield Avenue on the south to County Line Road on the north, and Lake Michigan on the east to 27th Street on the west. Just four years later a road was developed by the federal government

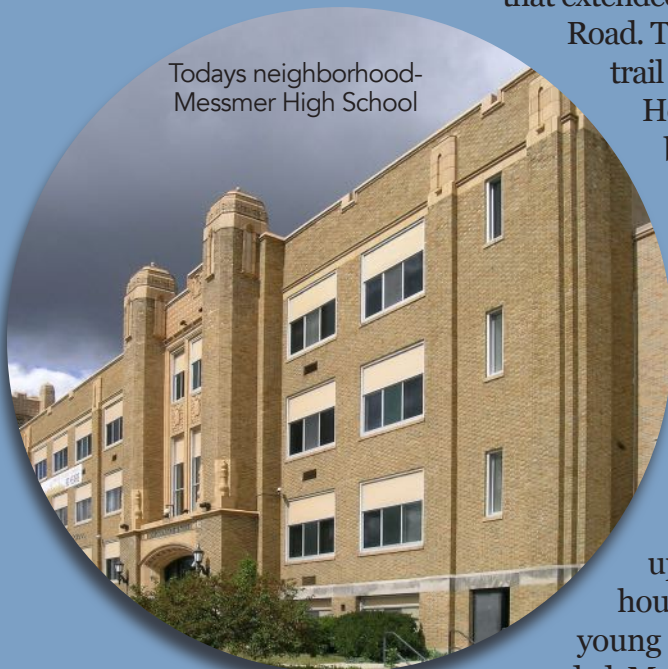
that extended to Green Bay, and was aptly named the Green Bay Road. The thoroughfare, which was nothing more than a wagon trail in its early years, traveled through today's Grover Heights' neighborhood. Many, mainly German, settlers built farms along the road.

Early 20th century in Grover Heights

In the early 20th century, the Milwaukee Northern Railway was completed that extended from Milwaukee to Sheboygan, with arbitrary stops near today's Grover Heights' neighborhood. By the late 1920s, the City of Milwaukee annexed the Grover Heights area and new housing gradually began to join, and sometimes replace, the earlier farms. The area attracted many settlers interested in a neighborhood upgrade, and this was reflected in the quality of housing stock that was constructed. Because so many young families were settling in the area, schools were needed. Messmer High School, named after Catholic theologian

and bishop, Sebastian Messmer, had originally opened in 1926 on 1st Street and Burleigh and moved to a newly constructed site at 8th Street and Capitol Drive in 1929. Most of the early families were again Germans; the others were a salad bowl of recent immigrants, including those from Holland, England, Bohemia, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Scandinavia, Ireland, and Italy.

See a family profile below.



Today's neighborhood-
Messmer High School

Grover Heights resident (1940s)

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

The Mattanos

Sometime during the early 1940s, the Mattanos moved to a home at 4047 North 6th in the Grover Heights' neighborhood. Son Castanzio (Steve) occupied the lower flat while his widowed mother Maria (listed as head of household) and sister Mary occupied the upper flat. His sister never married. It is not known if Steve had married or had a family.

The parents, Maria (b. 1902) and Dominick (b. 1879) were Italian immigrants. She had arrived in the United States in 1898 and he in 1903. Records show that the couple married in 1905. At that time they were living in Florida, possibly near earlier arriving relatives. Their children Steve and Mary were born there.

Sometime prior to 1920, the Mattanos migrated north to Wisconsin and settled on Jackson Street in Milwaukee's Third Ward—a haven for Italians at the time.

Dominick worked as a barber. By 1930, the couple had purchased a home near 10th Street and North Avenue. However, Dominick, who was 23 years older than Maria, passed away in 1933. Maria and her children remained at the home near 10th and North until after 1940. Maria, who had never attended school anywhere, took up the trade of a cigar maker after her husband's death.

It is very possible that either the Lola Mi Cigar Manufacturing Company or J. Froehlich & Sons Whole Leaf Tobacco—both located at 4200 North Green Bay Road on the northern edge of Grover Heights—may have been the carrots that drew the Mattanos to the neighborhood (see photoⁱ of typical cigar-making task to right). Mary worked as an inspector and Steve may have also worked at the cigar factory.

It is interesting to note the compensation that Maria received for her work. Census records show her working full time in 1940, 52 weeks in the year, but earning only \$800 annually. The median income for heads of households in 1940 was over \$1,300. No doubt her gender played a major role in the income disparity.

Maria Mattano died in 1974. No additional information was found on the children or how long they remained in the Grover Heights' neighborhood.



Green Bay Avenue

The road that had been the original conduit to the neighborhood, later became its commercial corridor. The following is a list of businesses on North Green Bay Avenue in 1947 following World War II. See summary and notes that follow.

<i>Addresses on N. Green Bay Ave. in the Grover Heights neighborhood in 1947</i>	<i>Businesses, organizations, apartments from the Milwaukee City Directory</i>
4087	George Amrhein Market Gardener
4107	Robert R. Schoof Excavation Contractor
4130	Erich Kasten Trucking
4141	Benzing Monument Company
4173	Justus C. Roegge Grocery & Meats
4175	Dorothy Lein Gifts

Notes from U.S. Census and other public records.

- Technically, only those addresses on the east side (even numbers) of the street were within the Grover Heights' neighborhood. But residents could easily access any businesses on Green Bay Road.
- As in most Milwaukee neighborhoods prior to 1970, few shopkeepers had attended high school. Most were also children of immigrants.
- George Amrhein, with the garden market, listed himself as a florist in 1940. Typical of the shopkeepers, he had completed the 8th grade. He was the grandson of immigrants from France and Germany.
- Robert R. Schoof, the contractor, was the son of a German immigrant. He'd completed the 8th grade.
- Erich Kasten, with the trucking company, was the son of German immigrants. He'd driven a truck for another company before opening his business.
- Justus C. Roegge, the grocer, was also the son of a German immigrant. He'd come to Milwaukee from Illinois.
- Dorothy Lein, with the gift shop, was again the child of a German immigrant. She was an anomaly on the streets, as she'd completed two years of high school. She never married.

Later 20th century in Grover Heights

Because homes were still being built in the Grover Heights' neighborhood during the Great Depression and World War II, the area did not experience much of a post-war housing boom. By 1960, both the Rufus King and Grover Heights neighborhoods were completely filled. It was also during these years that African Americans began to arrive. In the 1950s most of the new migrants were professionals. Later, other upwardly mobile blacks began to move to the area. 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 the other communities. As in most German-dominated areas in Milwaukee, the integration of the new population proceeded relatively smoothly, particularly after the passage of the national fair housing law and the Milwaukee fair housing law in 1968. Many African American families were able to purchase homes and become fixtures in 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 mainly middle class area on the Northwest Side was in economic decline.

Current populations (as of 2021)

Today, tiny Grover Heights has barely over 300 residents. Just under 9 in 10 are African Americans. Approximately 1 in 10 are European Americans (mostly of mixed European ancestry). The neighborhood also has a scattering of Latinos (nearly all of Puerto Rican descent), Asians, and people of multiple races in the area.

The median household income in Grover Heights is just under \$15,000, placing the neighborhood in the lower income stratum. The main jobs held by adult residents are in the fields of administration, sales, management, and education. Nearly four times the number of Grover Heights residents work in the field of computers/math than the proportion in other Milwaukee neighborhoods.

INTERESTING NEIGHBORHOOD FEATURES

- **Messmer Catholic School**, at 742 W. Capitol Drive, a k-4 through high school educational institution, focusing on academics, faith, and diversity.
- **Koss Corporation**, at 4129 N. Port Washington Road, a designer/manufacturer of head phones that came into national attention when their president of finance, Sue Sachdeva was charged with embezzling \$34 million from the company.

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.

JULY 4TH CELEBRATION—LINCOLN PARK			
When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
July 4th, dusk	Lincoln Park, 1301 W. Hampton Ave., Glendale	Fireworks at dusk.	Free

NATIONAL NIGHT OUT			
When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
First week Aug., weekday 4-8pm	Lincoln Park: 1301 W. Hampton Ave., Glendale	Fun evening of free food, games, rides, chance to dialogue with local police and community organizations.	Free

OKTOBERFEST-GLENDALE			
When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Early Sep. to early Oct., Fri.'s, Sat's, see website for hours	Heidelberg Park, 700 W Lexington Blvd., Glendale	Fest of traditional German brass bands, Schuhplatter folk dancing, singing, yodeling, sing-alongs, broiled chicken, bratwurst, spanferkel, rollbraten, pretzels, and more.	unk

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

If you are a resident in Grover Heights and wish to make an uplifting observation about this neighborhood, please send an email to JFLanthropologist@currently.com

PHOTOS

Today's neighborhood-Messmer High School



Today's neighborhood-N. Port Washington Rd. & Fiebrantz Ave.

Today's neighborhood-Houses on 9th & W. Messmer St.



Today's neighborhood-Houses on 6th & Fiebrantz 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 Dr. Jill Florence Lackey at: jflanthropologist@currently.com

¹ Photo attribution: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/dc/Dannamann_Cigar_Factory.jpg