

*Approximate boundaries:*  
N-E. Clybourn St; S-E. Erie St;  
E-Lake Michigan; W-Milwaukee River

# DOWNTOWN *Historic Third Ward*

## NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION

A high proportion of blocks in the Third Ward border a waterway. On the east is Lake Michigan. The Milwaukee River also runs through the Ward and connects to the Menomonee River at the western section of the neighborhood. The area has a lovely Riverwalk.

Most of the buildings are massive brick structures. Many of these had been warehouses in other incarnations and now house condos and shops. The mainly neoclassical buildings have ornamentation from the Victorian Gothic through the Art Deco eras. While the streets of the Historic Third Ward have few trees, the blocks are seasonally adorned with filled planters and flower baskets. Artwork and cultural centers are always within glancing distance. See photos below.

## HISTORY

The Historic Third Ward has experienced many rebirths. What is known today as an upscale, trendy neighborhood by most Milwaukeeans, was something much different in the past.

### Early populations

The major Indian nations that were settled in and around the Third Ward area when the Europeans arrived were the Menomonee and the Ho-Chunk. Near the Ward, on Jones Island and in the Menomonee Valley, were the Potawatomi. The fur traders followed the Indian settlements, and most of these were French, French Canadian, and Metis populations. One individual involved in the fur trade was Solomon Juneau, who would become Milwaukee's first mayor. His wife was part Menomonee. He was also a large investor in real estate and was responsible for surveying much of the land in the Ward. Curiously, he sold the 157 acres that would later be the Third Ward to his brother Pierre.



Today's neighborhood-  
Representation of Captain Foley

### *Development begins*

The first European Americans to begin developing the Third Ward were a scattering of Germans and Yankees. The Third Ward soon accommodated factories on its shores, including grain, shoe, and furniture industries—most built right on the shoreline of the rivers for easy access to ships. By the 1840s this area was becoming a mixed-use neighborhood of warehouses and factories, but with only a few houses.

With all the commerce, the area was desperately in need of a labor force. This need was first met in a large way by the Irish. About this time, the Irish were experiencing a tragedy in their homeland—the well-documented potato famine.

### *The Irish era and tragedy*

The Irish came from tragedy and experienced more tragedy when they arrived. The waters played a big role in their tragedies. First, many thousands died on the trip over.

In fact, just a few blocks south of the Ward on Jones Island, was a pest house. On the boats many Irish immigrants had contracted communicable diseases and were taken off the lake vessels before they got to shore and were literally locked inside the pest house. This was so they couldn't get out and spread the disease. Mainly they were just left there to die.

The very Catholic Irish came from mainly rural areas in Ireland and didn't emigrate with the kind of skills needed for urban centers. For those that reached the Milwaukee shore, they couldn't take just any job. What was available to them here was some work on the ships and docks, but mainly the work of clearing the unhealthy swamps that covered the Third Ward. They worked filling in the area --one wagon full of dirt at a time.

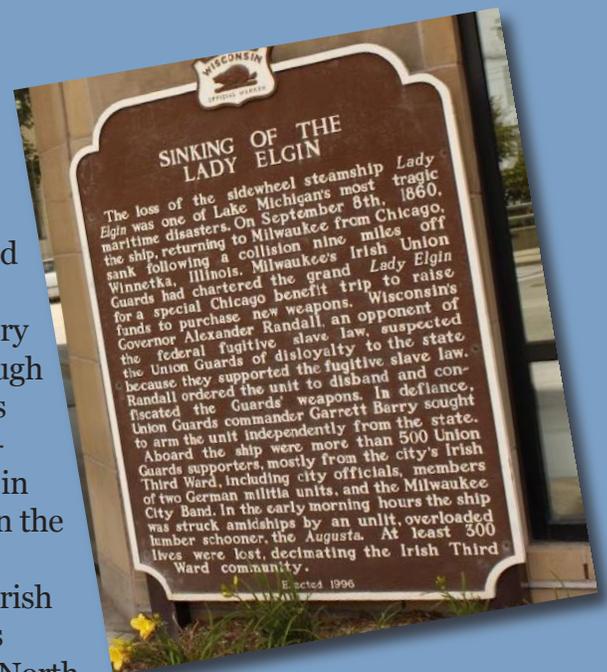
The Irish then built shanties between the Milwaukee River and the Lake, as most of the warehouses and factories were right on the shores of the river. The houses were so small and so close together that residents could literally stretch out their hands from their windows and touch the house next door.

The Third Ward Irish experienced more tragedies involving water. A lot of the Irish had family members who settled in Chicago and the Ward Irish would take steamers down Lake Michigan for visits. Then in 1860, the steamship Lady Elgin sank off the coast of Chicago on the return trip and 300 Irish perished. This was the second greatest shipwreck ever on the Great Lakes.

With their poverty, their string of tragedies, and very difficult jobs, the Irish in the Third Ward were a pretty rough and tumble crowd. In the mid to late 1800s, the Ward was called the "Bloody Third" because of all the arrests there—mainly due to drunken fights. According to data collected in 1858, the Irish were five more times likely to spend time in the county jail than any other cultural group.

But during the next few decades it looked like the Irish would fare better in the Ward. Third Ward commerce was opening up new jobs for the Irish. In 1856, the Chicago & North Western Railroad was built in the Third Ward and that linked Milwaukee to the Mississippi River, enabling the wholesalers to supply necessary goods to settlers in the West. In fact, the street names in today's Third Ward, such as Chicago, Buffalo, and St. Paul, are all places where the merchants traded the most often, either through Great Lakes shipping or the new railroad.

But tragedy would strike once again for the Third Ward Irish in 1892 when the Third Ward burned to the ground. This was Milwaukee's worst fire ever, and had a lot to do with the congested streets and alleyways. Commerce was so consolidated in the Ward that by 1890, the businesses and industries and railroad yards were stacking their lumber, coal, and drums of oil wherever there was room. The Irish fire chief of the time, James Foley (see photo), was making the argument that firefighting equipment could not get through blocked backroads, alleys and entrances to docks to fight any fires that might occur. Foley brought this issue to Milwaukee's Common Council but nothing was done to relieve the congested areas. Foley then argued in support of a fire boat to fight potential fires from the riverside. The fireboat Cataract was built and was stationed in the Milwaukee River. All of this played roles in the Third Ward Fire of 1892. What follows is excerpts from an article written by William Maher who had collected notes from Fire Chief Foley and Captain Clancy of Fire House 10 before they died.



Today's neighborhood-  
Plaque commemorating the sinking  
of The Lady Elgin

The fire alarm sounded at Engine House 10 (at 5:30 pm), but Clancy and crew were out on another call. A fire had started at the Union Oil and Paint Company Building located at 273 East Water Street (now 232 North Water Street). The fire spread rapidly in advance of very strong winds. Flashing tongues of fire extended from broken windows and burst into the street. Sounds from the roaring fire grew louder than the rushing wind. Increasing winds forced lusting fires to the adjoining Block Liquor Warehouse.

The fireboat Cataract was under way and, upon arrival, opened all its fire hoses upon the burning building from a riverside position. Having just returned from a fire call elsewhere, Clancy and crew at No. 10 Engine House were a few minutes late in responding to this call. However, they were soon on the scene, hoses were readied and operating. But by that time, the Block and Dohmen's Wholesale Drug Company buildings were also on fire.

By 6 p.m. the wind was fierce, fires had spread and a general alarm was sounded; all other local fire companies responded and a full attack was made on the Union Oil and Paint fire. Next door was a large, brick seven-story building, the Bub and Kipp Furniture Factory. Every floor was loaded with furniture. Gusting winds, roaring fires, the noise of the engines and sounds from fire hoses made such a racket that no one could hear orders or shouts of warning. Firemen concentrated all effort on the potentially dangerous Union Oil fire. Suddenly the furniture factory burst into a mass of flames. Tongues of fire extended outward from windows of the burning building. Gusting winds increased in force. The intensity of heat from the burning buildings forced fire fighters to withdraw or be overcome.

To appraise the worsening situation, Fire Chief James Foley ran to the corner of Buffalo Street. What he saw was frightening-nearly a city block of property was on fire. Upon their retreat to avoid being engulfed by the sudden burst of flames from the furniture factory, firemen were forced to abandon five major pieces of equipment. Engines and wagons unavoidably left behind were engulfed in a roaring inferno. This loss was one-third of the total fire-fighting equipment on the scene, but retreating firemen had escaped death by a very slim margin. At about 7:30 p.m., the east and south walls of the burning Bub and Kipp Building collapsed. Flames leaped out from behind its collapsed walls, across the alley and ignited the four-story paint factory of the J.E. Patton Company at 266-72 East Water Street. North of the paint factory, rapidly expanding fires engulfed the Milwaukee Art Glass and then the Kissinger Wholesale Liquor buildings. To the south of the paint building, on East Water Street, stood the dry goods store of Goll and Frank. It became surrounded by burning buildings on three sides. But the store was saved by the courage and effort on the parts of Captain Harden and the volunteer crew of local Irish youth who were under orders from Clancy. Their success was made possible by much help from the fireboat Cataract.

Unrelenting winds pressed tongues of fire onward. By 7:30 p.m., the raging fires were beyond the capabilities of local firemen. Chief Foley sent telegrams asking for help from Fire Marshal Swenie of Chicago and to Fire Chiefs at Racine, Kenosha, Sheboygan, Oshkosh and Janesville. In the meantime, on-scene firemen regrouped. They cast ropes with grappling hooks onto engines and steamers in the inferno. Hand over hand they were hauled out of the flames. Although somewhat damaged, the engines were still functional and immediately put to work.

But time spent retrieving the endangered firefighting equipment took valuable time away from preventing the burgeoning number of new fires and restraining others. Strong winds pressed tongues of fire in every direction, but mainly across Broadway and Buffalo streets. At about 8 p.m., Jacob Wellner's Grocery Warehouse on Broadway was ablaze and soon thereafter Roundy and Peckham's four-storied Wholesale Grocery Warehouse and the National Liquor Warehouse (a three-storied building) were afire. Adjacent to Jacob Wellner's Warehouse were two buildings-four and five stories high-J.S. Spenser's Milwaukee Chair Company. They, too, became engulfed by a raging torrent of flames. The winds were unrelenting.

Recognizing the immediate danger to buildings along Broadway Street, Chief Foley made a front along Chicago and Detroit streets. At that moment, ammonia tanks in the Weisel and Vilter building at Broadway and Detroit exploded. Its walls collapsed and debris was hurled in all directions. Chief Foley and two other firemen were trapped beneath the fallen debris. All were dragged from beneath the fallen rubble but the two firemen were killed and only Foley survived. Although badly injured, he declined medical attention and continued at his post until the fire was under control.

At the intersection of East Water and Chicago Streets firemen fought valiantly to prevent the ravaging fires from engulfing the buildings located along the east bank of the Milwaukee River. Streams of water were poured into the endangered four-story Ferneckes Brothers Candy Company, but to no avail. Within one hour the building was swallowed up by an overwhelming mass of fire. Due to pressure of intense heat within the building, three of its brick walls burst outward without warning onto East Water Street.

At 10 p.m., the harsh winds showed no sign of clemency. With total disregard for life or property, ruthless winds extended gluttonous fires even farther. Flames rapidly engulfed the building owned by the Leidersdorff Tobacco Company, located at East Water and Buffalo streets. In just a few minutes the building was completely consumed by roaring fires and its walls collapsed. Fallen burning timbers and large broken sections of its stone and brick walls completely closed the intersection. All opportunities for a 'last ditch' effort to use East Water Street for the transfer of fire engines and other fire wagons were now gone.

Near gale winds pressed hungry flames southward from Leidersdorff's building to Inbusch Brothers Grocery Warehouse and to the adjacent street. Engine House 10 and buildings to the south were set afire and soon the Reideburg Bodden Vinegar Works was swallowed by ravaging fires. The high winds continued unabated.

As fearful Irish immigrants watched building after building succumb to the growing number of fires, their dwindling hope became despair when angry flames approached their frail frame homes. Suddenly the Milwaukee Gas Works and the Hansen Malt and Hop buildings burst into flames. Colored plumes of fire and hot red embers thrust skyward. The stench of burning chemicals, malt, animal hides, charred wood, pungent odors from the Vinegar Company fire and increased multicolored flames cast before their eyes a vivid image of hellfire. Fearing for their lives, residents fled from their homes on Jefferson, Jackson and Van Buren streets. Some carried away all belongings they could heap into a wheelbarrow, on their backs, and what their aching arms could carry. Through tearful eyes, children saw skeletons of their homes in flames and others newly-clothed with flowing flames of fire. What was abandoned was rapidly consumed by the gluttonous appetite of fire.

By now it was certain that the Chicago and North Western freight yards were in great danger. More than two hundred boxcars stood on the sidings. Two C&NW freight houses stood on Jackson Street. Freight House Number 1 was 360 feet long and sixty feet

wide, and Freight House Number 2 was 475 feet long. These two buildings, end to end, extended from Buffalo and beyond Menomonee streets. The high winds continued without mercy. This was the height of the crisis and only three fire engines were all that could be sent to save both freight houses and their contents from the same fate visited upon the other buildings. In spite of great efforts, both freight houses had to be abandoned to the rapidly expanding fires which were apparently bent for the total destruction of all Third Ward properties.

The National Guard was called out to help the fleeing victims of the fire, to guard against pillagers and to restrain the increasing numbers of curious onlookers. Families were separated in flight and cries of fear and loss were heard above the din. Tearful mothers clutched their children as they made their way to safer ground. The mood of the crowd varied. Many of the onlookers expressed great compassion; others cast aside all thought of danger to themselves and offered much needed help to weeping refugees. Some calloused bystanders were amused by the spectacle of fire and made bets among themselves on the progress of many fires that raced before the wind.

### **Reinforcements Arrive**

At about 10:30 p.m., Chief Barr of Kenosha arrived with an engine, two fire officers and 18 crew members. They were greeted with applause and shouts from a large body of curious onlookers. Soon thereafter the First Assistant Fire Marshal, 39 officers and a full crew arrived from Chicago. Chief Abesser and his crew arrived from Racine.

Chief Brauer, crew and engines from Oshkosh arrived aboard flat cars on C&NW tracks. They were somewhat late in arriving because the tracks before them were filled with a large number of freight cars hauled to safety from the burning freight yards.

There were 300 firefighters on the scene, but by 11 p.m. flames spread from the burning Fernekes building to the Hilpert Company building, manufacturing chemists. Soon drums of oil and other chemicals were ignited. Numerous explosions sent forth sharp cracking and booming sounds. Hot, multicolored flames shot skyward.

By midnight the fire was under control but still blazing. More than 440 buildings throughout 20 city blocks were completely destroyed. Calculated in terms of a 1892 appraisal, the loss was in excess of \$4.5 million. Two firemen and five other people died, more than 1,800 people were made homeless and about 185 freight cars were lost. This was Milwaukee's greatest fire. Some refugees spend the night in St. John Cathedral, some at the local schoolhouse and others with friends or at hotels nearby. Relief was soon at hand. Financial pledges poured in from other states, local businesses and private sources to help the refugees. The local Chamber of Commerce raised \$50,000 on the spot. Donations were made by the P.D. Armour Company of Chicago, and many others. Within two weeks, \$137,000 was raised.

The origin of the fire was investigated but its cause was undetermined. Arson was expected but never established.

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**The Milwaukee Series**

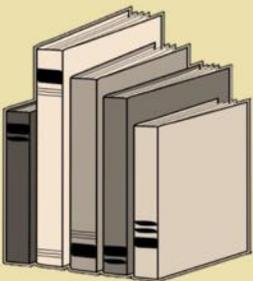
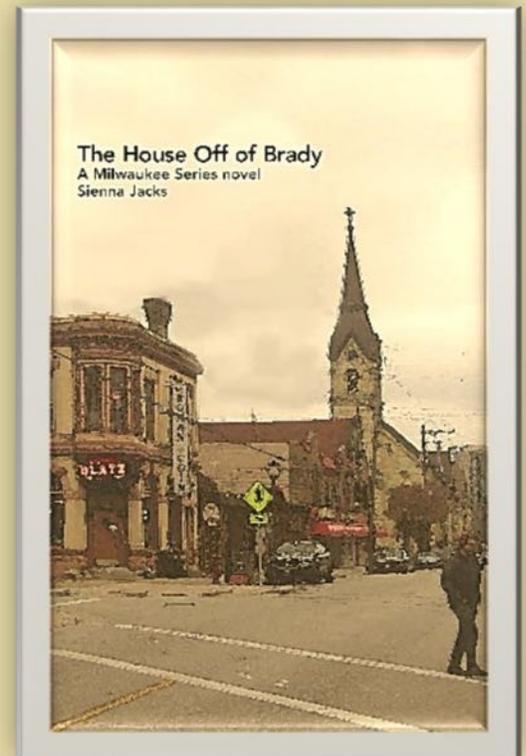
Novels that educate readers on Milwaukee neighborhoods

This series, written by mystery novelist Sienna Jacks takes place in historic neighborhoods in Milwaukee.

*The House Off of Brady*

Illuminating the histories of the Third Ward and Brady Street

Two young anthropologists, trying to convince a local nonprofit to sponsor a neighborhood house museum, must show that the historical occupants of the house were representative of Milwaukee's Brady Street, and that they project positive images for the neighborhood. Their efforts are boosted by a personal journal left behind by one of the home's occupants—Giuseppe Russo. But as the young anthropologists translate and transcribe the journal, they learn that Giuseppe had been banished from his former community in the Third Ward. Are they about to stumble on information that could kill the project—or something perhaps even worse?



**MECAH Publishing**

*Milwaukee Ethnic Collection of Arts and Humanities*

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*All of the author's royalties go to supporting neighborhood museums and exhibits in Milwaukee, when book is purchased through the publisher*

The fire ended the era of the Irish in the Third Ward. Most lost their homes. Most also moved on to jobs in the railroad yards of the newly developing Merrill Park neighborhood. There they were eventually successful. Their success was based less on entrepreneurial endeavors like many immigrant groups than on their proclivity for public work. They learned they could accomplish as much or more in politics, and this became their forte in Milwaukee, and still is to this day. In fact during just one 50-year period, the Irish in Merrill Park occupied over 100 judgeships, city legislative offices, and City and County Department heads.

But back in the Third Ward, the neighborhood was about to experience another of its rebirths.

### *The Italian era and more tragedy*

The Third Ward was being rebuilt between about 1895 and 1940. Some of the most famous architects in the Midwest participated in the rebuilding of the Ward.

This was also the time that a wave of Sicilians was arriving to this area—many from Porticello, a fishing village on the island's north coast, near Palermo, and other villages in the Sicilian province of Messina. The Italians were like the Irish in many ways. They were almost homogeneously Catholic and were leaving their rural homeland because of hunger and lack of land and jobs. They were also similar to the Irish in that most came here as unskilled workers and took entry-level jobs. In the Ward this was helping to rebuild the area and taking jobs in the shipping industry.

Their Catholic practices were different than the Irish. Unlike the Irish, the Italians liked to express their faith in street festivals and religious processions. The early arriving Sicilians

built a church of their own, the Blessed Virgin of Pompei, on Jackson Street, which was nicknamed the "little pink church." Today,

processions still rule. One can find them at Festa Italiana on the Summerfest grounds (see photo) and in church neighborhoods throughout Milwaukee, where blocks of floats that honor the Madonna and village patron saints promenade. One can follow these processions and pin actual donations on the long dresses and ribbons of the saints. One of these floats is small replica of the little pink church.

The Italians were unlike the Irish in another way. They had a different way of building strength within their communities. While the Irish sought political office and jobs in the public sector, the Italians were more entrepreneurial. They found their niche in the food industry. By 1920, the Italian Ward had 45 grocers and 2 spaghetti factories.

They founded Milwaukee's first pizza restaurant, the Caradara Club, in the Third Ward right after World War II and opened Italian restaurants all over the city. But one of their more interesting features was the open-air vegetable market they developed at the turn of the 20th century. This was called Commission Row. Here fruit and vegetable wholesalers hawked their wares at the curbside to Milwaukee-area grocers and restaurants. It earned its name because the salesmen used to work strictly on commission.

The importance of the food industry during these years is evident in the Ward's commercial corridors. And this industry attracted a diverse lot of investors—not merely Italians. Below is a list of businesses that operated on North Water Street in the Third Ward in 1945. The businesses serving the food and drink industry (mostly brokers and wholesalers) are highlighted in yellow. The garment industry (again mostly brokers) was also well-represented in the Third Ward in 1945. These businesses are highlighted in blue. See summary and notes below



Today's neighborhood-  
Procession at Festa Italiana

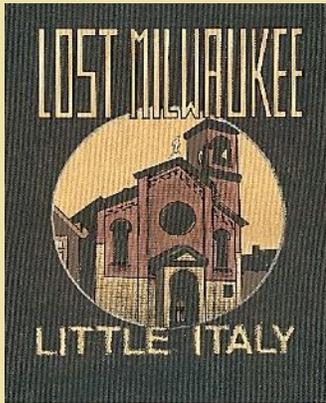
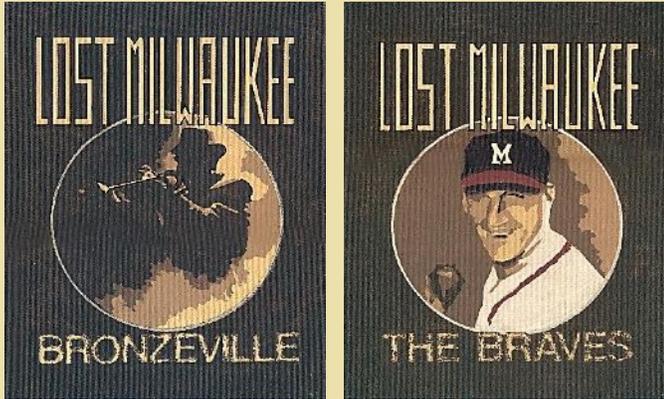
<i>Addresses on N. Water in the Third Ward in 1945</i>	<i>Names of businesses and organizations from Milwaukee City Directory</i>
104	CMSTP&P Railway Passenger Department
105	Engine Company No. 15 Fire Prevention Bureau
106	Milwaukee Electric Tool Corporation Artmoore Company Inc. Household Specialty Manufacturers
117	CW McNally Company Plumbing Supplies
124	<b>Peter Bogeovich Tavern</b>
125-129	Joys Brothers Company Ship Chandlers
130	Wilmer R. Schuh Auto Parking
141-143	Yahr-Lange Inc. Wholesale Drugs
201	Hillman Garment Company
	Reed Products Inc. Jacket Manufacturing
	Titan Manufacturing Company
203	Milwaukee Knit Products Corporation
208	Universal Furniture Mart Burton Dixie Corporation
215	<b>Moritz &amp; Winter Company Men's Clothing Manufacturers</b>
217	Wisconsin Pharmacal Company
221	<b>Arthur M. Bloch Liquor Importers</b>
223	Edward Belond Furniture Company HBH Specialty Company
225-227	Tate's Bender Inc. Machine Manufacturers
226	Patek Brothers Inc. Paints
227	<b>Linda-Lee Inc. Sportswear and Dresses</b>
229	<b>Pasch Brothers' Bottler Supplies</b>
230	D. Gash and Sons Paper Company
223-243	Vacant
236	<b>Merchandizing Corporation Vending Machines</b>
245	<b>Belin Garment Company</b>
249	AC Supply Company Machine Dealers Marathon Electric Manufacturing Corporation Roto Flow Screen Company
250	<b>John Hoffman &amp; Sons Wholesale Groceries</b>

<i>Addresses on N. Water in the Third Ward in 1945</i>	<i>Names of businesses and organizations from Milwaukee City Directory</i>
301-309	Merchandise Building William R. Miller Curtain Manufacturing Modern Maid Apron Company Bufland Company Real Estate Sun Bias Binding Textiles Company, Dress Trimmings
301-309 (continued)	Landover & Sons Inc. Wholesale Dry Goods Standard Overall Manufacturing Company Leavens & Kissinger Company Wholesale Women's Furnishings J.H. Goll Company Linens White Star Mills Wholesale Dry Goods
302	Vacant
306	Marber Paper Company Julius L. Nicolai Electricians
309	Frank Specialty Company Wholesale Notions
310	Resnick's Hand Bag Company Inc.
312	Cutler-Hammer Company
316	Phillip Ackerman and Sons Wholesale Men's Furnishings
318	A.E. Sielaff Paper Company
319	F. Dohmen Company Wholesale Drugs
323-327	Rluhr Manufacturing Company Bicycle Parts
324	Gateway Milwaukee Company
325-331	Vacant
326	A.Dernehl & Sons Company
330	Albert Wholesale Grocers
331	Samuel J. Ansfield Company Auctioneers
332	Wisconsin Handbag Company
333	Vacant
335-339	Badger Brokerage Company General Merchandise
336-338	Midwest Distributing Company Wholesale Lighting Equipment
340	H. Boym and Company General Merchandise
341	Edward Maves Company Wholesale Notions
342	Mayer Building D. Kurman Company Wholesale Tobacco Western Union Telegraph Company E.P. Hoyer Company Printers J.O. Franklin & Sons Fruit Brokers

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# The Lost Milwaukee Series

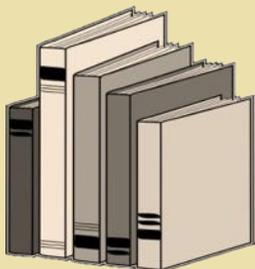
Canvas reproductions by local artist  
SLJ



10.5" x 13.5", unframed reproductions on poster board that evoke three loved institutions that once thrived in Milwaukee, but were tragically lost in the 1960s. Bring back the memory.

Each: \$25 (free shipping)  
All three: \$70 (free shipping)

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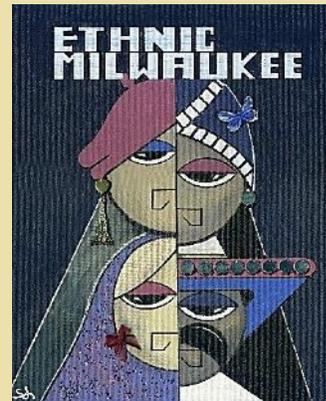
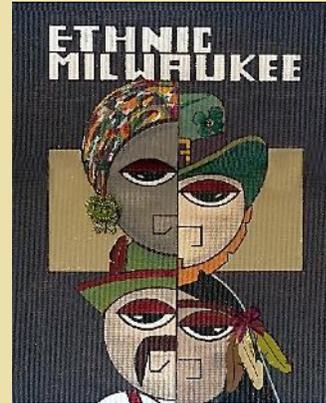


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# The Ethnic Milwaukee Series

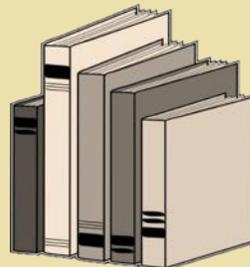
Canvas reproductions by local artist  
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10.5" x 13.5", unframed reproductions on poster board that celebrate Milwaukee's diversity (images representing Irish, African American, German, American Indian, Polish, French, Latino, Hmong).

Each: \$25 (free shipping)  
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<i>Addresses on N. Water in the Third Ward in 1945</i>	<i>Names of businesses and organizations from Milwaukee City Directory</i>
342 (continued)	<p>American Fruit Growers Inc.  Milwaukee Retail Grocers Association  Wisconsin Retail Food Dealers Association  Wisconsin Retailers Fire Insurance Company, Ltd.</p>
342 (continued)	<p>Charles L.W. Crosby Coffee Broker  Wales Adding Machine Repair Service  Robert J. Thomson Coffee Broker  Aloysius F. O'Brien Coffee Broker  Wisconsin Wholesale Food Distributors Association</p>
342 (continued)	<p>Charles M. Johnson &amp; Sons Manufacturers Agents  National Insulating Company  National Vulcanized Fibre Company  Colvin-Schlick Company Merchandise Brokers  E.F. Steitz Company Inc. Merchandise Brokers</p>
342 (continued)	<p>Stein's Metropolitan Novelty Company  Oscar A. Hose Merchandise Broker  Max H. Lerner Advertising Novelties  Jerome Host Merchandize Broker  John C. Lukens Food Broker</p>
342 (continued)	<p>Amore Distributing Company Feed Brokers  Ben Rosenfeld Sportswear Company  A.C. McClung and Company Wholesale Novelties  B.A. Railton Wholesale Groceries  John H. Emde And Associations Food Brokers</p>
342 (continued)	<p>Pesold-McNulty Company Merchandise Brokers  Milwaukee Browerage Company Food Brokers  Klein Brothers Advertising Distributers  Graham Paper Company</p>
342 (continued) Hanson Brokerage Company	<p>McEully and Marcan Fruit and Vegetable Brokers  Ditto Sales and Service Duplicating Machines  California Packing Sales Company  Wycoff Drawn Steel Company  Harvey Wolff Manufacturers' Agent</p>
342 (continued)	<p>Detroit Investment Company Real Estate  F. Mayer Shoe Company  Harvey P. Coons Merchandise Broker  Fred L. Jacobs Company Food Brokers  Helen Zolin Studios Pictures</p>
342 (continued)	<p>Mrs. R. Gebel's Home Made Apron Company  Carson-Pirie-Scott and Company Wholesale Dry Goods</p>

Addresses on N. Water in the Third Ward in 1945	Names of businesses and organizations from Milwaukee City Directory
342 (continued)	Mayor-Hughes Company Rugs Athen Laboratories Research and Cosmetics Athea Products Company Cosmetics
342 (continued)	Athea Research and Laboratories Emulsions Frank Water Jr. Dresses Inc. Rath Packing Company Alex Smith and Sons Carpet Company Brierly Neckwear Company
342 (continued)	Badger Raincoat Company Helen Zolin Studios Carpenter Brothers Inc. Foundry J. Glick Suspender Company E.M. Hollister Company
345	Ruby Products Inc. Paper Specialties Bronx Novel-Ty Company Inc. Wholesale Men's Furnishings Joseph S. Fain and Company Wholesale Men's Furnishings
347-349	ABC Company Infants' Clothes Catholic Supply Company Clerical Vestments
401	Vacant
402	Vacant
403	Vacant
406	A.S. Goodrich Company Wholesale Cigars and Tobacco
407	Meyer Gronik Company Auctioneers
408	Fritz Gust Restaurant Good Food Inc.
410	A.F. Stechhan Curtain Company
413-415	Middleton Manufacturing Company Hat Manufacturers
414	J. Wick and Company Leaf Tobacco Joseph H. Vogt Leaf Tobacco
416	A.L. Gebhardt Company Tanners
417	Lily Tulip Cup and Specialty Company Wholesale Paper
418	American Surplus Sales Company Inc. Merchandise Brokers Associated Merchandise Manufacturers Brokers
419	Vacant
422	Joe Ott Advertising and Letter Service Inc.
423	Kaplan Jobbing Company

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# The Milwaukee Neighborhood Poster Series

Researched and designed by local artist, Rick Petrie

24" x 18", framed posters of select Milwaukee neighborhoods. Each: \$90 (free shipping)

MILWAUKEE NEIGHBORHOODS: *The Third Ward*

**BROADWAY**

The Historic Third Ward has experienced many rebirths. What is known today as an upscale, trendy neighborhood by most Milwaukeeans, was something much different in the past.

The major Indian nations that were settled in and around the Third Ward area when the Europeans arrived were the Menomonee and the Ho Chunk. Near the Ward, on Jones Island and in the Menomonee Valley, were the Potawatomi.

The first European Americans to begin developing the Third Ward were a scattering of Germans and Yankees. The Third Ward soon accommodated factories on its shores, including grain, shoe, and furniture industries—most built right on the shoreline of the rivers for easy access to ships.

With all the commerce, the area was desperately in need of a labor force. This need was first met in a large way by the Irish.

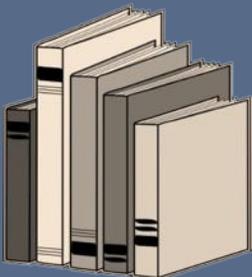
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right after World War Two and opened Italian restaurants all over the city. But one of their more interesting features was the open-air vegetable market they developed at the turn of the 20th century. This was called Commission Row.

In the 1950s the City of Milwaukee initiated its first urban renewal project in the Ward. In the area between Michigan and Menomonee Streets east of Milwaukee Street, over 200 of the 250 buildings were condemned and later razed, despite fierce resistance by residents.

Eventually the Historic Third Ward Association, other organizations, and businesses began to develop plans for the Ward's latest rebirth—that of an upscale, trendy neighborhood. Many of the warehouses were turned into pricey condos, restaurants, and boutiques and this began to attract an upwardly mobile, young professional population.



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Addresses on N. Water in the Third Ward in 1945	Names of businesses and organizations from Milwaukee City Directory
424	Tip Top Inn Tavern
425	Hoge and Company Wholesale Carpets Bill's Specialty Company Souvenirs
442-429	Badger Cah and Carry Stores Wholesale Tobacco
428	S. Fein Brothers Wholesale Men's Clothing
430	Kromer Cap Company
431	Vacant
434	Victory Parking Station
441	Victory Parking Station
442	Badger Tobacco Company Great Lakes Sales Company Tobacco Brokers
446	William H. DuBois Tavern

### Summary and notes from census and other public records

- Water Street was not a business corridor designed to serve the neighborhood. There were no retail grocers, bakeries, or barbers on the street. These businesses were found in the eastern section of the neighborhood.
- Despite just coming out of the Great Depression and World War II, commerce was teeming on Water Street—mostly with wholesale companies or brokerage firms which negotiated the buying and selling of goods. A few vacancies remained on the street.
- The businesses on Water involved in the food and drink industry were not owned by Italians. Included among them were Charles Crosby, the son of Yankees, Aloysius F. O'Brien, the son of Irish immigrants; B.A. Railton, from Chicago, the son of English immigrants; John H. Emde, the son of a German immigrant; Erwin Marcan, the son of German immigrants; Fred L. Jacobs, from Michigan (possibly of Jewish ancestry); and John Hoffman, likely of German extraction. The same could be true of the restaurateurs and barkeepers, including Peter Bogevich, a Croatian immigrant from Yugoslavia, who'd operated a tug boat before opening his tavern; Fritz Gust, the son of a German immigrant, who'd operated his restaurant at that location since before 1910; and William H. DuBois, with the bar, the son of French immigrants.
- The garment businesses on Water were also not owned by Italians. The garment proprietors appear to have been dominated by Jews. These included Phillip Ackerman, a Jewish immigrant from Hungary; Adolph Moritz, a German immigrant; and Harry Hillman from Romania; An exception was Edward Maves, an ethnic Pomeranian.

Returning to the Italians. As tragedy struck the Irish, causing them to lose their homes, so tragedy would strike the Italians. In the 1950s the City of Milwaukee initiated its first urban renewal project in the Ward. In the area between Michigan and Menomonee Streets east of Milwaukee Street, over 200 of the 250 buildings were condemned and later razed, despite fierce resistance by residents. The population of the Third Ward dropped from 2,402 in 1950 to 258 in 1960. The building of I-794 completed the job when the Blessed Virgin of Pompei was raised (see photo of monument below).

However, Commission Row stayed active for some time after freeway development. Many of those businesses had closed early, as supermarkets wiped out corner grocers and pushcart vendors. But a block of Broadway, between St. Paul Avenue and Buffalo Street, hosted three large wholesalers until the early 2000s. When the final wholesaler, Jennaro Brothers, left the neighborhood, the Historic Third Ward Association committed to return some semblance of these public markets and the Italian presence to the Ward. This ultimately became the Milwaukee Public Market. Other ways that this neighborhood has tried to bring back the Italian presence is through Festa Italiana at the Third Ward Summerfest grounds and the opening of the noble Italian Community and Conference Center in the Historic Third Ward (see photo).

## Current populations (as of 2021)

While some Irish and Italians do live in today's Historic Third Ward, the population has changed significantly. After most of the Italians were forced out of the Ward, the remaining areas were barely inhabited. For a time it became a haven for artists, because the lofts available from the former warehouses could be rented at very low costs. (*See neighborhood profile of one of these artists below*) But these hearty buildings were too stunning to be left to deteriorate. Eventually the Historic Third Ward Association, other organizations, and businesses began to develop plans for the Ward's latest rebirth—that of an upscale, trendy neighborhood. Many of the warehouses were turned into pricey condos, restaurants, and boutiques and this began to attract an upwardly mobile, young professional population.

Today's Ward population is overwhelmingly European American, with household incomes higher than any other Milwaukee neighborhood. Rents in the Historic Third Ward are nearly double what they are in the rest of the city (averaging over \$2,300 a month).

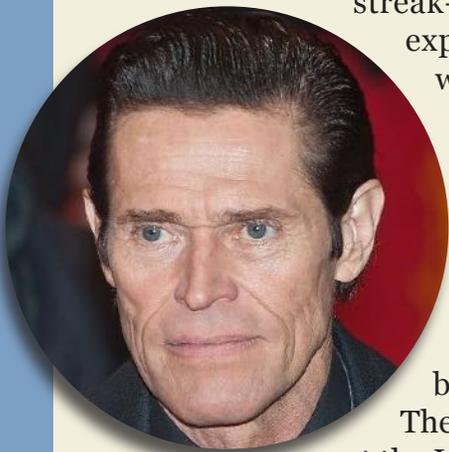
## Third Ward Profile Resident (1970s)

### Willem Dafoe

Born William J. Dafoe in 1956 to parents Muriel Isabel (nee Sprissler) and Dr. William Alfred Dafoe, in Appleton, Wisconsin, he began using the moniker "Willem" in secondary school. As one of seven children of busy parents, Dafoe early on exercised an independent streak—once getting suspended from high school for shooting an explicit film. Just to "get out of town," Willem and his friends would journey to Milwaukee. By the mid-1970s he spent 18 months at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. He left to pursue a stint in Theater X and moved to the Third Ward neighborhood--then a welcoming home for creative people with limited means.

Theatre X, located in the Third Ward, had been formed by a group of theater faculty and students from UW-Milwaukee in 1969. Immediately this experimental troupe became known for producing unconventional and unique plays. They drew attention with their production of *The Measure's Taken* at the International Brecht Symposium in 1970.

Dafoe left Theater X in 1976, moving to New York where he apprenticed under Richard Schechner, chief of The Performance Group, which later morphed into the Wooster



Group, another experimental troupe. Shortly Dafoe became part of the organization.

Dafoe later turned to movies. He received an Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor for his parts as Elias in *Platoon* in 1986 and Max Schreck in *Shadow of the Vampire* in 2000. Other film appearances include *The English Patient*, *The Last Temptation of Christ*, and the *Spider-Man* set.

Theater X disbanded in 2003 due to financial problems. It is interesting to note that when Dafoe left the troupe, his replacement was Violent Femmes drummer Victor DeLorenzo.

## INTERESTING NEIGHBORHOOD FEATURES

- **Broadway Theatre Center**, at 158 N. Broadway, featuring the Cabot House Opera Theatre and the Skylight Music Theatre
- **Summerfest Festival Grounds**, at 639 E. Summerfest Pl., hosting Summerfest and a number of Milwaukee festivals
- **Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design**, at 273 E. Erie St., a college with a focus on the arts
- **Milwaukee Public Market**, at 400 N. Water St., an ensemble of food, arts, wine, and craft vendors
- **Italian Community Center**, at 631 E. Chicago St., uniting Italians throughout the Greater Milwaukee area

## 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.

SUMMERFEST FOR FREE			
When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late Jun., opening day, 12-3pm	639 E. Summerfest Pl.	World's largest music festival, with food, drinks, activities for all.	Free with 3 nonperishable food items

THIRD WARD ART FESTIVAL			
When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Early Sep., Sat. & Sun. 10am-6pm	On Broadway between St. Paul & Menomonee Sts.	Showcase of more than 140 juried artists, with live music, food, and activities for children	Free (food extra)

POLISH FEST			
When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Mid Jun., Fri.-Sat., 12pm-12am, Sun. 12pm-8pm	639 E. Summerfest Pl.	Celebration of Polish traditions, music, food, music, kids' activities.	unk

### FESTA ITALIANA

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late Jul., Fri. –Sat. 11:30am-12am, Sun. 11:30am-11pm	639 E. Summerfest Pl.	Celebration of Italian traditions, music, food, music, kids' activities.	unk

### IRISH FEST

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Mid. Aug., Thu. 5-10pm, Fri. 4pm-12am, Sat., 12pm-12am, Sun. 11am-10pm	639 E. Summerfest Pl.	Celebration of Irish traditions, music, food, music, kids' activities.	unk

### GERMAN FEST

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late Jul., Fri. 3pm-12am, Sat. 12pm-12am, Sun. 12pm-9pm	639 E. Summerfest Pl.	Celebration of German traditions, music, food, music, kids' activities.	unk

### GALLERY NIGHT AND DAY

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late Jul., Fri. 5-9pm and Sat. 10am-4pm	Check web page	Milwaukee's two-day premier art event for both the experienced art connoisseur and most beginning admirers that features 50 venues to explore throughout the downtown Milwaukee area four times a year.	Free

### GALLERY NIGHT AND DAY

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late Oct., Fri. 5-9pm and Sat. 10am-4pm	Check web page	Milwaukee's two-day premier art event for both the experienced art connoisseur and most beginning admirers that features 50 venues to explore throughout the downtown Milwaukee area four times a year.	Free

### GALLERY NIGHT AND DAY

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late Jan., Fri. 5-9pm and Sat. 10am-4pm	Check web page	Milwaukee's two-day premier art event for both the experienced art connoisseur and most beginning admirers that features 50 venues to explore throughout the downtown Milwaukee area four times a year.	Free

### GALLERY NIGHT AND DAY

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late Apr. Fri. 5-9pm and Sat. 10am-4pm	Check web page	Milwaukee's two-day premier art event for both the experienced art connoisseur and most beginning admirers that features 50 venues to explore throughout the downtown Milwaukee area four times a year.	Free

### CHRISTMAS IN THE WARD

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Fri. eve in early Dec.	Chicago & Broadway in Third Ward	Bands, tree lighting, bake sales, carriage rides, dancers.	Free

### WALKING TOUR—HISTORIC THIRD WARD

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late May-mid Oct., Sat.'s, 11am	Meets by the Bubl bike station in front of the Commission House at 400 N. Broadway	Opportunity to learn about the wonderfully designed warehouses and the diverse group of industries that thrived in them in the Third Ward.	unk

### AYRE IN THE SQUARE

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Mid Jun. thru late Aug., 6:30-8:30	Catalano Square, at Broadway and Menomonee St.	An evening series featuring an eclectic mix of local artists.	Free

### GALLERY AT MILWAUKEE INSTITUTE OF ART & DESIGN

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Mon.-Sat. 10am-5pm	273 E. Erie St.	Rotating exhibitions of renowned artists, MIAD students, and MIAD faculty.	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>

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**Milwaukee's ethnic guide**

A literal stroll through neighborhoods where Milwaukee's ethnic groups settled

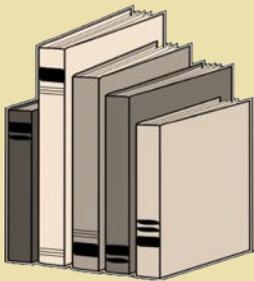
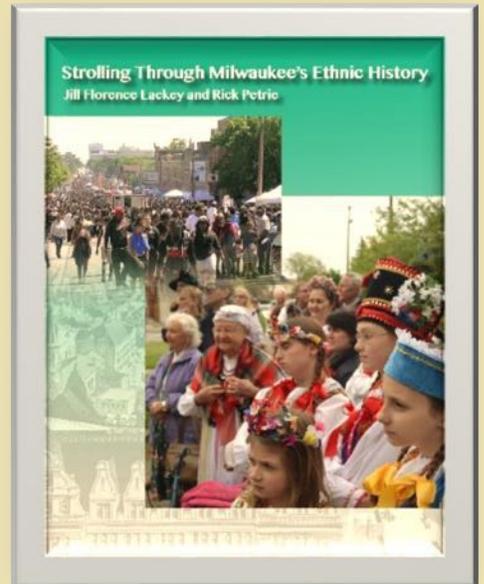
Dr. Jill Florence Lackey and Rick Petrie

*Strolling through Milwaukee's Ethnic History*

Chapters taking place in Lincoln Village, Walker's Point, Third Ward, Halyard Park, East Town, Lake Park, Jones Island, West Town, Riverwest

An "up close and personal" look at local ethnic life by directing readers to the neighborhoods and venues where the groups left their marks. *Strolling* brings readers directly into their experiences, whether it involves ambling through the environments they built or participating in contemporary ethnic activities.

Ethnic groups covered: Milwaukee Germans, Irish, African Americans, Italians, Mexicans, French, English, Norwegians, Jews, Hmong, North American Indians, Scots/Scots Irish, Czechs/Slovaks, Kashubes, Greeks, Puerto Ricans, and Burmese.



**MECAH Publishing**

*Milwaukee Ethnic Collection of Arts and Humanities*

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"*Strolling through Milwaukee's Ethnic History* is an intriguing guide to the ethnic history in our midst and a colorful reminder that Milwaukee has always been a city of newcomers."  
- John Gurda

## QUOTES FROM RESIDENTS

### Quotes from an oral history conducted by Urban Anthropology Inc. in 2008<sup>1</sup>— REMEMBERING THEN

“It started out with the Germans, then it went to the Irish, and then the Italians. Our Lady of Pompeii was designated as the first historic landmark in the state of Wisconsin, and three weeks later, she gets taken down to make room for the freeway-- economic development they said.”

“And jeez, there were five or six festivals all going on in the Third Ward, and it all happened in the streets of the Third Ward before Summerfest. Summerfest really didn't start happening until what, 30 years ago? But the cultural festivals, I can tell you for the Italian one, was in the streets of the Third Ward for the longest time, and I don't know when they switched it over to the Summerfest grounds. So to the Italians, the food, family, and music, and that all religious things were it.”

“Most of the produce guys [of Commission Row] were Italian. There was one Jewish guy. In that [produce] group, was there a subculture. The guys that unloaded the trucks, they would be called “lumpers.” The lumpers were casual, day labor guys that worked for cash. The truck driver would hire them to move the product in the truck to the back door, to the tailgate. Most delivery was specified at that time as tailgate delivery, and there were no docks. Everything was on the street, and those guys were predominantly--what's the right word here--Black or African American? So that was a different culture that hung around with the Italians and the one Jewish guy who owned the businesses.”

“We had guys that sold fish house to house. A truck used to come by. Well first he had a horse and wagon and then he got modern and got a truck. The cats used to follow him. Really. That's the truth. There would be cats all around this truck, trying to get the fish that were on this truck.”

“Yeah, we had a natatorium. That's where we could go three times a week. The men could shower, and I think twice a week or three times a week, the girls could go shower in the same place. But you couldn't go at the same time that the girls were there, of course. There was this one guy who is dead now. He was trying to see what the girls looked like, so he went up on the roof [where] there was a skylight on the roof of the natatorium, and he was looking down on it. Somehow he slipped or something, and he fell. He went all the way down in there—into the water.”

“We had the Pompeii Athletic Club. All of the societies, all of the Sicilian Societies. The Sicilians all came from a different town in Sicily, and each one had their own patron saint, so they all belonged to that society, and they all had their own clubs. Everyone had their own societies, and they still have those as of today. There's still the same knowledge there was 60 years ago.”

“There were different kinds of leaders back then. You had the strutters. While it happens and while there is a general feeling of, ‘oh yeah, he's important,’ or, ‘he's a big shot,’ there's always the undertone of, ‘jackass.’ With the doctor, the dentist, the attorney, no one ever said ‘jackass.’ They were just in awe that someone did this much.”

“Well, as I thought of it when we were kids, we were underprivileged, and we were the poorest of the whole city, and that we were just stuck there. But now I think we were in the best neighborhood of the whole city, and the most interesting, and the nicest of all the neighborhoods there were. So, my ideas have changed around a little bit.”

“The expressway had just come in, which had been a major disruption and cause of concern in the Italian community, because the Little [Pink] Church was being destroyed. So, there was disruption, and everyone felt displaced. Such an old school environment. Produce row there was all cobble-

stones. It wasn't anything—concrete, asphalt—it wasn't anything that was modern day construction materials. The building that my dad had was in had a lean of 12 inches from one side to the other, and the door was crooked. It had sunk or done something, and no one had done much to repair that. It looked like a tired, warehouse, a disrupted district at that point.”

“When the freeway came down by the lake there, and they built the high rise bridge, and they knocked down the Pompeii church. That was the biggest impact on the community that I remember. Nothing really impacted us as much as that, except for when the city came in and condemned all of the houses. They condemned all of our houses, and we had to move out. We had an all-brick home, and we had to move out of it, because it was condemned, because the city said it was, and there was nothing we could do about it.”

“It was very industrial, before any of these things were here. Broadway--especially down that side was still produce. Tons--many, many produce shops. Not at all commercial--very industrial with all the produce. And the building where MIAD is was just this old closed-down factory. A beautiful building, I don't know when it even closed down, but as long as I've been coming around here it's always been an abandoned factory.”

“Well, most of the buildings were underused, let's say that. I don't know if it'd be right to say that they were vacant, but they were empty. They had been factories and warehouses and in the mid-'70's. It was a transition period from what had probably been a very bustling, prosperous neighborhood to one that was very quiet. I mean you could go out at night after seven, eight o'clock and it was deserted. I mean, it was so deserted that the women students at the Photo Center always had to have people escort them to their cars. So it was very quiet; it was very sparsely populated at night; it was deserted. But it was also an area that because of all that open space and under-utilization and so forth, it was very attractive to artists. Because all that big spaces and cheap rent and people could come and have studios, have schools, that kind of thing.”

### **Quotes from oral history conducted by Urban Anthropology Inc. in 2008— DISCUSSING NOW**

“The Third Ward had a lot of external cosmetic things done to the buildings, and I think they felt from a business standpoint they should settle here to keep the business going. It proved to be true, too. They said almost immediately their revenues doubled from where they had been.”

“The neighborhood as a whole has done a good job in maintaining the integrity of the warehouses. They're not tearing them down and replacing them with a shiny new buildings. They're maintaining the space and incorporating new businesses into them.”

“Now it's incredibly vital, and in a very simple and basic term--it's amazing. In the three years that I've been here, the difficulty our patrons at the theater have with parking is ten-fold, which is just a simple way to look at it. There is so much activity, there are so many things going on, so many people living in the Third Ward. It's a very, very different world for everybody. Mostly it's positive, the parking is negative, but most of it is positive. It's been really thrilling to see, and kind of remarkable to think about how successful the revitalization has been.”

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<sup>1</sup> 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-  
Procession at Fiesta Italiana



Today's neighborhood-  
Italian Community & Conference Center



Today's neighborhood-Condos, eateries, and river walk in the Third Ward



Today's neighborhood-  
Procession at Fiesta Italiana featuring a replica of the  
"Little Pink Church"



Today's neighborhood-  
Memorial to the "Little Pink Church"

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](mailto:jflanthropologist@currently.com)