

**Approximate boundaries:**  
N-W. Edgerton Ave; S-W. Grange Ave;  
E-S. Howell Ave, W-S. 9<sup>th</sup> St

# FAR SOUTH SIDE *Holler Park*

## NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION

Holler Park is a small neighborhood west of Mitchell Field. The area between Howell Avenue and South 6th Street is comprised of mainly industrial buildings, large distribution warehouses, and airport hotels. The residential area is between 6th to 9th Streets and south of the park. The home architectural style is mainly mid-20th century ranch. There are a few older colonial and bungalow-style houses scattered throughout the area.

The neighborhood has significant green space in the park, also named Holler Park, with 15 acres, a tot lot, nature study areas, outdoor pool, basketball court, picnic areas, and the Holler Park lodge.

## HISTORY

Holler Park is one far south side neighborhood among many that makes up today's Garden District. The boundaries of the Garden District are those of the 13th Aldermanic District. All Garden District neighborhoods were once part of the Town of Lake, with boundaries of Lake Michigan to South 27th Street and Greenfield to College Avenues. By the mid-1950s, the City of Milwaukee had annexed the areas that today encompass the Garden District.

### Early populations

Many of the far south side neighborhoods that comprise today's Garden District owe a debt to the dreams of a local Norwegian named John Saveland. Saveland owned a booming business on Water Street that provided provisions for fishing boats, steamships, and schooners that sailed from Milwaukee. And he also had an interest in real estate. In 1887 Saveland organized a group of investors that purchased 30 acres of land bordered by today's Bradley, Howard, Whitnall, and Howell. The group hoped to attract upper middle class home buyers to their project—people who would work in the city and retire to their county estates at the end of the work day.

But despite a convenient Milwaukee streetcar with stops along Howell Avenue, few lots were sold in the early days. Saveland ultimately turned some of the land into a recreational venture, with an amusement hall and grounds. It wasn't until the time of Saveland's death in 1909 that the area was finally beginning to attract settlers. These were not the upper middle class professionals that Saveland had expected, but south side working class people—mostly Poles.

### *Holler Park specifics*

A handful of settlers migrated into the Holler Park area in the first half of the 20th century. Below is a profile of one of the neighborhood's earliest families, and an excellent example of the lives of Polish immigrants.



Today's neighborhood-  
House on 6th St. & Grange,  
near or at the location of the  
Lake Stock Farm

## Holler Park family profile (1920s-1960s)

(Photos and other information from public records at Ancestry.com)

### The Ignasiaks

Thomas Ignasiak was born in 1882 in Sockaczew, Mazowieckie, Poland (the Russian sector of Poland). He arrived in the United States shortly after the turn of the century, possibly alone. By 1910 he was boarding with another Polish family, the Selerskis, on South 7th Street (then 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue) in today's Lincoln Village neighborhood. At the time he was working as a trimmer in a nearby foundry. Within the year he married Josephine Braun, who was also a Polish immigrant, but from the German sector. Their first child, Irene, was born in 1912.

During the years in Lincoln Village, the Ignasiak family grew much larger. Ultimately Thomas and Josephine would be parents to five sons and three daughters. Despite the family responsibilities, the couple saved as much money as they could and by sometime in the 1920s were able to purchase land in the Town of Lake, a home, and all the necessary provisions to begin a stock farm. The farm was located at today's 538 W. Grange in today's Holler Park Milwaukee neighborhood (the Town of Lake was annexed to the City of Milwaukee in 1954).

The farm, named "Lake Stock Farm," proved successful and continued into at least the 1960s. As Thomas and Josephine

advanced into their seventies, oldest son Edward and his wife Leona took over the farm management. However, Edward died in 1956 and the major responsibilities fell on Leona and her 20-year-old son, also named Edward.

Something happened in 1962. On February 19, Thomas Ignasiak died. The following day, Josephine Ignasiak also died. It is not known if the pair fell victim to some accident or fire or if this was a case of the *widowhood effect* in which a grieving

spouse of a longtime married couple dies shortly after the passing of the other spouse. Both were buried at St. Adalbert's Cemetery (see gravestone to left).

It is also not known how long the Lake Stock Farm stayed in operation after the founders' deaths.



The Holler Park neighborhood did not seriously begin to fill up until after World War II, and even then, very slowly. By the late 1950s, the area had only 34 residences and 3 businesses. Most of these were on South 6th Street or the north side of Grange Avenue, where the Ignasiak farm had operated. Most of the residents were Polish or German, with a scattering of Scots, English, Slovaks, and Scandinavians. The neighborhood did not develop a commercial corridor.

### Current populations (as of 2021)

Today, tiny Holler Park has just under 500 residents. Over 7 in 10 are European Americans (most still of German and Polish ancestry, but with a substantial number claiming Irish). Just over 1 in 7 are Latinos (mostly Mexicans, but including quite a few Puerto Ricans). There is also a scattering of Asians (mostly Hmong), Somalis and other indigenous Africans, Arabs, Egyptians, and people of multiple backgrounds.

Holler Park households have a median income of just under \$60,000 a year, placing them in the middle-income stratum. The largest number of occupations claimed by residents are in the fields of administration, production, and sales.

Gardening (or as some apparently say—farming) is a major hobby among Holler Park residents—a tradition carried over from the time when the neighborhood was part of the Town of Lake. In 2008, the Common Council approved a resolution to name all the neighborhoods in the 13th Aldermanic District (which includes the western section of Holler Park) the *Garden District of the City of Milwaukee*, capitalizing on a long tradition of gardening among residents and businesses. At the time, Alderman Witkowski said, “Residents and businesses here have worked hard to solidify this identity. We have had perennial exchanges and gatherings, lectures by noted gardeners, and even awarded area businesses landscaping awards to encourage and foster the character of our area.” The idea for the Garden District grew from discussions between the alderman and residents about the interest in and tradition of gardening and landscaping within the district. The effort began in earnest in early 2007, when a group of individuals formalized a garden committee and met regularly to create a vision for the 13th Aldermanic District that focused on gardening and landscaping to beautify and improve quality-of-life.

Holler Park has had a neighborhood association since 2007. Among their activities are improving lodge-building, creating a natural rain garden to catch run-off before it enters the park lagoon, organizing block parties, and collaborating with the Easter Seal Society.

### 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.

GARDEN DISTRICT FARMERS MARKET			
When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Early Jun. through mid Oct., Sat.'s 1-5pm	Just south of Howard on 6th St.	Market of fresh vegetables and other vendors.	Free

GARDEN DISTRICT CRAFT FAIR			
When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late Apr., Sat. 9am-3pm	3333 S. Howell	Fair of over 25 vendors, concessions, prizes, bake sale, and more.	\$1

SLEDDING--WILSON			
When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Winter, daytime	Wilson Recreation, 4001 S. 20th St.	Sledding hills for family and friends.	Free

### GLOW SKATE

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late Dec., Fri. 7:30-9pm	Wilson Park Arena, 4001 S 20th St.	Skating, glow-in-the-dark necklaces, holiday lights, music, prize drawings and a gourmet hot-chocolate bar (skate rentals available).	unk

### JULY 4TH CELEBRATION--WILSON

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
July 4, 9am-10pm	Wilson Park, 1601 W. Howard Ave.	Parade, Doll Buggy, Bike & Trike, and Coaster judging, music, games, fireworks.	Free

### EGYPTIAN COPTIC BAKE SALE—OAK CREEK

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Mid Dec., Sat., Sun. 10am-6pm	St. Mary & St. Antonious Coptic Orthodox Church, 1521 W. Drexel Ave., Oak Creek	Christmas bake sale, ethnic food, church tour, Egyptian souvenirs.	Free

### TASTE OF EGYPT—OAK CREEK

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late Aug., Fri. 12-8pm, Sat. 10am-80pm, Sun. 11am-7pm	St. Mary and St. Antonious Coptic Orthodox Church, 1521 W. Drexel Ave., Oak Creek	Opportunity to sample Egyptian foods at Egyptian Christian church, alcohol-free family fun.	Free

### OAK CREEK LIONSFEST

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Early Sep., Fri. starts 3pm, Sat. 12pm, Sun. 9am, Mon. 12pm	9327 S. Shepard Ave., Oak Creek	Labor Day long weekend festival with food, Brew City Wrestling, raffle, midway rides, and more.	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

### **Quotes from an ongoing oral history of the Garden District by Urban Anthropology Inc.<sup>1</sup>—about THEN**

“The neighborhood I grew up in was Polish and German. It is past the time where people speak Polish. My parents spoke Polish to each other but didn’t want us to learn it. Because they wanted us to be Americans. St. Gerard’s was a German School and up the street was St. Alexandria and that was a Polish school. And they still said mass in Polish. But the difference was there was no tuition at St. Gerard’s. And it was an English speaking school, so my dad picked St. Gerard’s.”

### **Quotes from an ongoing oral history of the Garden District by Urban Anthropology Inc.—about NOW**

“My children are now grown up, but we did enjoy a lot of activity—for example, Fourth of July, fireworks, go for swimming, gather all the families and do barbecues here.”

“So between the security, the cleaning, and a safe neighborhood, we find everything here easy. Between the Gateway and the neighborhood associations, we still are doing more stuff. We can’t do everything. As a nonprofit, we need to get money to establish more stuff to make it more friendly. The lights . . . we think that maybe by next year we will have more holiday lights. We have banners that say ‘10 years for the Gateway to Milwaukee’ and now we have the wreaths. We started with it last year and now we have more. Step by step. We have maybe 25 hotels now. We encourage the airport to take care of the highway. We work with them to do the maintenance. A lot of stuff. It wasn’t like that when I first came.”

“I think this neighborhood has been and remains largely white European background. But over the last 35 years, because of the purchase and operation of the Islamic Center, quite a few Muslim families have moved into the area. Thirty-five years ago there were practically none.”

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<sup>11</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-6<sup>th</sup> & Abbot Ave.

Today's neighborhood-6<sup>th</sup> & Maplewood Ct.



Today's neighborhood-7<sup>th</sup> & Maplewood Ct.



Today's neighborhood-Holler Park lodge





Today's neighborhood-Houses on 6<sup>th</sup> St. & Grange,  
near or at the location of the Lake Stock Farm (see above)



Today's neighborhood-Holler Park

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)