

Approximate boundaries:

N-W. Mobile St (partial) KK River; **S**-W. Cleveland Ave (partial) W. Oklahoma Ave W. Morgan Ave; **E**-S. 35th St, **W**-S. 60th St (partial) S. 51st St

SOUTHWEST SIDE *Jackson Park*

NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION

According to John Gurda in *Milwaukee, City of Neighborhoods*, the Jackson Park neighborhood is a community of “quiet streets and well-kept homes wrapped around the largest park on the city’s South Side.”

The neighborhood’s topography varies. Just south of an industrial area, neighborhood streets follow a grid pattern south of Cleveland Avenue and west of Jackson Park, while north of Cleveland the streets shadow the winding path of the Kinnickinnic River Parkway. A principally residential area, area homes vary and include bungalows, Period Revivals, and much smaller, post-World War Two Cape Cods and ranch homes. A few businesses are scattered along a six-block area on Oklahoma Avenue.

There is considerable green space along the Kinnickinnic River Parkway as well as in two parks. Jackson Park is a 113-acre commons with a pond, basketball courts, football field, tennis courts, swimming pool, and pavilion. Manitoba Park is a small 3.5- acre square in the western section of the neighborhood.

HISTORY

The Jackson Park neighborhood, like many in Milwaukee, was named after its park, which preceded the full development of the neighborhood.

Early populations

The first signs of settlement in the area that would become the Jackson Park neighborhood were pioneer farmers that settled along Forest Home Avenue in the mid to late 1800s. Forest Home at the time was the Janesville Plank Road, serving as a well- traveled toll road that was the only link between the developing city and the country. One of the farmers settling on the road was Richard Reynolds, a British military veteran. He owned 160 acres along Janesville Plank between today’s 35th and 43rd Streets. On his land he farmed and built a hotel that was often used by early urbanites while traveling or just to spend a day in the countryside.

By the late 1800s a scattering of mainly Poles and Germans from the Old/Historic South Side began to migrate south and purchase land around Forest Home Avenue. Perhaps seeing the area as a future Milwaukee neighborhood, the city Park Commission purchased the northern half of the Reynolds farm to preserve forested space in 1907. The area was named Jackson Park for President Andrew Jackson. Two years later the park became the beneficiary of the Spirit of Commerce zinc sculpture that had been at the entrance of the Chamber of Commerce building at Broadway and Michigan.

Milwaukee annexed most of today’s Jackson Park neighborhood in 1927. More Poles and Germans from the Old South Side continued to migrate to the area in the late 1920s. Many were second and third generation Milwaukeeans who had achieved economic success and built some of

Today's neighborhood- Mitchell Manor Senior Living Community on border between West Allis & Jackson Park



the bungalows that still exist in the neighborhood. In 1927 the local Poles founded Blessed Sacrament Parish on South 40th Street and Oklahoma (see resident profile below). In 1932, the local Germans built Jackson Park Lutheran Church on South 49th near Oklahoma with their own hands.

Development continued on the park, and electric lights, a pavilion, sports fields, and the beginning of a lagoon were added (the lagoon was completed later by the Civilian Conservation Corps). As the Great Depression began to effect Milwaukee, initiatives slowed to a halt. The Jackson Park area was only sparsely populated when the Great Depression began. The neighborhood never developed a commercial corridor. Most residents could walk to a slightly greater variation of shops on South 27th Street just east of the Jackson Park boundaries (see a business listing of South 27th in 1935 in the [Southgate neighborhood](#)).

By the 1930s a scattering of businesses appeared along South 35th Street between Lincoln (just north of the neighborhood) and Morgan Avenues. Below is a list in 1937. See summary and notes below.

<i>Addresses on S. 35th in 1937</i>	<i>Names of businesses and organizations from the Milwaukee City Directory</i>
2351	Arthur L. Pedersen Trucking
2432	Louis Bintzler Painter
2934	M & M Restaurant Supply Company
3512 w.s. corner	Mount Olivet Cemetery
3512 n.e. corner	Philip E. Schroeter Grocery

Summary and notes from census and other records:

- As in most Milwaukee neighborhoods prior to 1970, shopkeepers rarely had attended high school.
- Arthur Pedersen, with the trucking company, lived on S. 31st St. in 1940 with wife Eleanor and five children. Both of his parents were born in Norway. He'd completed the 6th grade.
- Louis Bintzler, the painter, lived on the same block as his painting shop with wife Pauline. He'd completed the 8th grade.
- M & M Restaurant Supply Company may have been owned by a Rudolph Mayer, but information is inconclusive.
- Mt. Olivet Cemetery was established by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese in 1907. Today it is 72 acres with over 27,000 in-ground burials.
- Philip E. Schroeter, with the grocery store, lived on S. 33rd St. He later opened a print shop nearby. The son of a German immigrant, Philip had completed the 8th grade.

An example of resident profiles for the Jackson Park area in 1937 appears below.

Jackson Park random residents (1930s)

*Names selected randomly from the 1937 City Directory in the Jackson Park area
(additional information was found in U.S. Census and other records)*

Bernard M. Kobelinski and Stella Usterbowski



In 1937, Bernard Kobelinski, a Catholic priest, and Stella Usterbowski, the housekeeper, lived at the parsonage of Blessed Sacrament Congregation near 40th and Oklahoma. Blessed Sacrament had been the church that the first-arriving Poles had built in the Jackson Park neighborhood in 1927. Father Kobelinski, the parish priest, was 43 at the time and Stella was 52.

Very little could be found on Stella except that she was Wisconsin-born and the daughter of Polish immigrants. She apparently never married. Census records suggest that she may have later moved in with her elderly father in the 1940s.

Father Kobelinski was also a Wisconsin-born child of Polish immigrants. His parents were John Kobelinski and Josepha Gankowska. He had many accomplishments. In his lifetime he earned a PhD and received the honorary title of Monsignor (often given to someone rendering valuable services to the Church). While serving the Jackson Park neighborhood, Father Kobelinski traveled abroad at least twice, probably representing the Church in an official capacity. One of the trips involved a stop in Southampton, England—but this could have been a transfer spot. The destination of the second trip is not known.

At age 26, Father Kobelinski served in another parish under an older priest, Father Waclaw Kruszka. Kruszka was the brother of Michal Kruszka, the editor of the largest Polish newspaper outside of Poland--the Milwaukee-based *Kuryer Polski*. The Kruszka brothers had spent most of their adult lives advocating for the promotion of Polish priests in the German-dominated archdiocese in Milwaukee. This created a 25-year battle with the local archbishop, Swiss-born Sebastian Messmer. Father Waclaw Kruszka had traveled to Rome on numerous occasions to take the case to the Vatican.

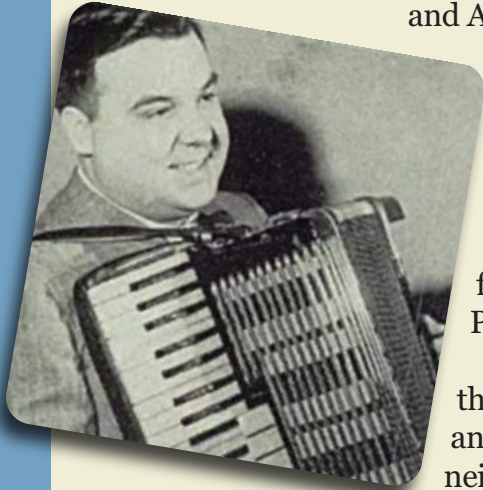
Sometime after 1940, an acclaimed musician from the Walker's Point neighborhood moved his family into the Jackson Park neighborhood where the family remained until the mid-1970. See the musician's profile below.

Spotlight on Jackson Park resident (1940s)

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

Louis G. Bashell, “Milwaukee’s Polka King”

Louis (“Louie”) Bashell was raised in the Walker’s Point neighborhood. He was born on July, 1, 1914 while his family was living on Bruce Street (then Park Place). His parents, Joe and Antonia Bashell (nee Samsa), were immigrants from Slovenia.



Louie took up the accordion at age 7 and began playing it at his parents’ tavern in the neighborhood—a practice he continued for 50 years. As a teen, he honed his skills in the music program of Boy’s Tech High School (photo to left is him returning to the school for an event from Boy’s Tech yearbook). His musical genre was the polka--Slovenian style. The Bashell family later moved to 13th and Walker, again in the Walker’s Point neighborhood.

While Bashell’s acclaimed professional career began in the Walker’s Point neighborhood, it reached its heights after he and his wife, Stephine A. Starich, moved to the Jackson Park neighborhood at 5521 W. Jackson Park Drive. While living in Walker’s Point, he formed a trio with himself, a drummer, and a saxophone player. Later, in the 1940s, Bashell formed a five-piece band. One of their recordings, the Slovenian folk song, "Zidana Marela," ("Silk Umbrella"), sold out as fast as the band could make the records. This resulted in a contract with RCA Victor.

Bashell remained a Wisconsinite and a family man throughout his career. When RCA wanted Bashell to promote the records on a lengthy national tour, he refused, insisting that he wanted to be close to his wife and children. He continued to focus his career on the local scene, becoming known as “Milwaukee’s Polka King.”

While living in the Jackson Park neighborhood, and later in Greendale, he received numerous awards. These included six nominations for polka awards by the Wisconsin Area Music Industry, an induction into the Wisconsin Polka Hall of Fame, and a lifetime achievement award from the National Cleveland Style Polka Hall of Fame. His most significant award was when he became Wisconsin's first resident to receive a National Heritage Fellowship grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, becoming a National Heritage Fellow.

Having conducted his own polka band for more than seven decades, Bushell died of complications from pneumonia in 2008. He was interred at Mount Olivet Cemetery in Milwaukee.

Post World War Two

Everything changed at the close of World War Two. Veterans returning from service needed housing. The need was so great that the County erected 50 tiny Wingfoot houses (see exampleⁱ below) made of plywood walls at the site of today’s Manitoba Park at 49th Street and Manitoba. The houses remained at that site well into the 1950s.

Businesses grew along neighboring South 27th Street. The greatest change on the street was the Southgate Shopping Mall, opened in 1951. Southgate was Milwaukee's first modern shopping center, operating a full generation before Brookfield Square, Northridge or Southridge. It was constructed on a 31-acre farmland parcel in the 3000 block of South 27th.

Between 1945 and 1960 the population of Jackson Park grew by leaps and bounds. For decades the vast majority of residents still claimed Polish and German ancestry. That was about to change.

Arrival of Latinos

Latinos (mainly Mexicans) began to settle on the near South Side in the 1920s and slowly migrated south into the Polish areas. Since the 1970s, the Mexican community all over the South Side, including Jackson Park, grew dramatically, and other Latinos have arrived from the Caribbean and Central and South America

A number of push-pull factors influenced the population changes. During the early 1900s Mexican immigration to the United States expanded because of worsening economic conditions in Mexico. A large wave of Mexicans also left the country during the political and economic turmoil created by the Mexican Revolution of 1910. In addition, both Mexicans and Puerto Ricans were often recruited by local industries to fill workplace needs. Beginning in 1917, the US government implemented a series of immigration restriction policies to curb the influx of Mexicans, mainly in response to local claims that Mexicans (who often worked for low wages) were taking jobs away from 'true' Americans.

But they found a place to fit in. Latinos—particularly Mexicans--were able to settle successfully alongside the Poles in particular because they shared so many traits in common. These included the Catholic faith, the focus on the Madonna figure, polka music traditions, similarities in childrearing and eldercare practices, and an entrepreneurial spirit.

Jackson Park Community Association

Something else was happening in the latter decades of the 20th century. Residents began to organize to ensure the health and enrichment of their neighborhood. Much of the organizing began in the 1970s when neighbors bonded to oppose a planned freeway that would remove a western edge of their park. This battle was won in 1983, just after the formal founding of the Jackson Park Community Association.

Just a few years later the Association began raising funds for the restoration of the Spirit of Commerce sculpture in the park. The zinc statue was fully restored and dedicated in 1991.

Current populations (as of 2017)

Today, the sizable Jackson Park neighborhood has just over 8,000 residents. Of these, approximately half still claim Polish or German ancestry. Nearly 1 in 6 are Latinos-- mostly of Mexican ancestry. An additional 1 in 20 each are African Americans and Asians (mostly Hmong/Lao with a scattering



Today's neighborhood-Spirit of Commerce in Jackson Park

of Asian Indians). The remaining population is comprised of people of multiple backgrounds. The neighborhood skews slightly older than Milwaukee in general, with nearly 3 in 10 residents aged 45 to 64.

Just over half of the Jackson Park residents live in upper middle and middle income households, with annual incomes between \$50,001 and \$150,000. It is also a well-educated neighborhood with approximately 4 in 10 residents having earned bachelor's or graduate degrees. The occupations cited most often by residents are in the fields of administration, production, and food service.

Home ownership is high in Jackson Park. Approximately 6 in 10 property units in the neighborhood are owned. Select costs for home ownership (e.g., mortgages, deeds of trust, contracts to purchase, taxes, insurance) are relatively high by Milwaukee standards, with just over 4 in 10 homes costing between \$1,501 and \$2,000 a month. Rents are reasonable with nearly 9 in 10 units going for \$501 to \$1,000 a month.

The Jackson Park Community Association still has a strong presence in the neighborhood. The organization promotes after school and athletic youth programs, block watch and park watch groups, safe community and holiday activities for families, and pride and participation in the community by residents and business owners.

INTERESTING NEIGHBORHOOD FEATURES

- **Blessed Sacrament Congregation**, at 3100 S. 41st St., the early church of neighborhood Polish Catholics.
- **Mitchell Manor Senior Living Community**, at 5301 W. Lincoln, on the West Allis/Jackson Park border, named after the country home of the famed Mitchell family.
- **Spirit of Commerce in Jackson Park**, a zinc sculpture by German artist Gustav Haug, recently restored.
- **Jackson Park Lutheran Church**, at 45th and Oklahoma, a congregation founded by early arriving Germans in the neighborhood.

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.

WINTER FEST AT JACKSON PARK			
When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Mid Dec., Sat. 11am-3 pm	Jackson Park, 3500 W. Forest Home Ave.	Face-painting, cocoa, crafts for kids, music, and more.	Free

JULY 4TH CELEBRATION--JACKSON			
When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
July 4am-10pm	Jackson Park, 3500 W. Forest Home Ave.	Parade, Doll Buggy, Bike & Trike, and Coaster judging, free ice cream, fireworks.	Free

JACKSON PARK FARMERS MARKET

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Early Jun. thru early Sep., Thu. 3:30-7pm	3300 W. Forest Home Ave.	Fresh food from Wisconsin farms, baked goods, crafts, art.	Free

AUGUST NIGHTS CONCERTS

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Aug., Thu's, 6:30-8:30pm	Jackson Park, 3500 W. Forest Home (Picnic Area #2)	Concerts in park.	Free

MOVIES AT SOUTHGATE CINEMA

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Daily	3320 S. 30th St.	Popular movies at a Marcus Theater.	\$10, \$7.50 kids, military (with ID), seniors; less for matinees

NIGHT OUT TRICK OR TREAT

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late Oct., Sat. 6-8pm	Manitoba Park, 49th & Manitoba	Halloween celebration.	Free

UMOS MEXICAN INDEPENDENCE DAY PARADE

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Mid Sep., Sun. 10am-12pm	Starts at 20th & Oklahoma Ave	Southside parade of arts, floats, local organizations honoring Mexican Independence Day.	Free

TOUR OF FOREST HOME CEMETERY

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Daily 8am-4:30pm	2405 W. Forest Home	Tour the beautiful Chapel Gardens, Landmark Chapel, and the Hall of History that tells the story of Milwaukee dignitaries, including European founders of Milwaukee, several mayors, major African American activists, and brewery tycoons	Free

ST. RITA PARISH FESTIVAL—WEST ALLIS

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Mid Jul., Fri. 7-11pm, Sat. 7-11pm, Sun. 11am-5pm	6021 W. Lincoln Ave., West Allis	Festival of live music, special dinner each day, and more.	Free

MILWAUKEE FIRE MUSEUM

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
1st Sun. of each month, 1-4pm, (except holidays)	1516 W. Oklahoma Ave.	Opportunity to see exhibits and artifacts of the Milwaukee Fire Department back to the 1800s; stories of history of Department and fires.	Free

SLEDDING

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

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

“Jackson Park, to me, is a hidden gem and one of the city’s best kept secret neighborhoods. Like many of our neighbors, we purchased our home in the Jackson Park neighborhood and then a few years later purchased our second home in the neighborhood just a few blocks away from my husband’s parents. It’s common to see multi-generations living in the neighborhood. We all look out for each other, whether it’s helping with shoveling during big snows or finding a lost pet. We love everything from the little libraries to the surrounding parks and bike trails. Many neighbors volunteer assisting with the active Jackson Park Community Association with all the social offerings from the Neighborhood Watch to Easter Egg Hunt and Night Time Trick or Treating to the Jackson Park Farmers Market, August Nights Music in the Park and the Tree Lighting Ceremony. It’s such a friendly place where neighbors wave to each other, get to know each other and share their talents. I can’t imagine any better place to call home.”

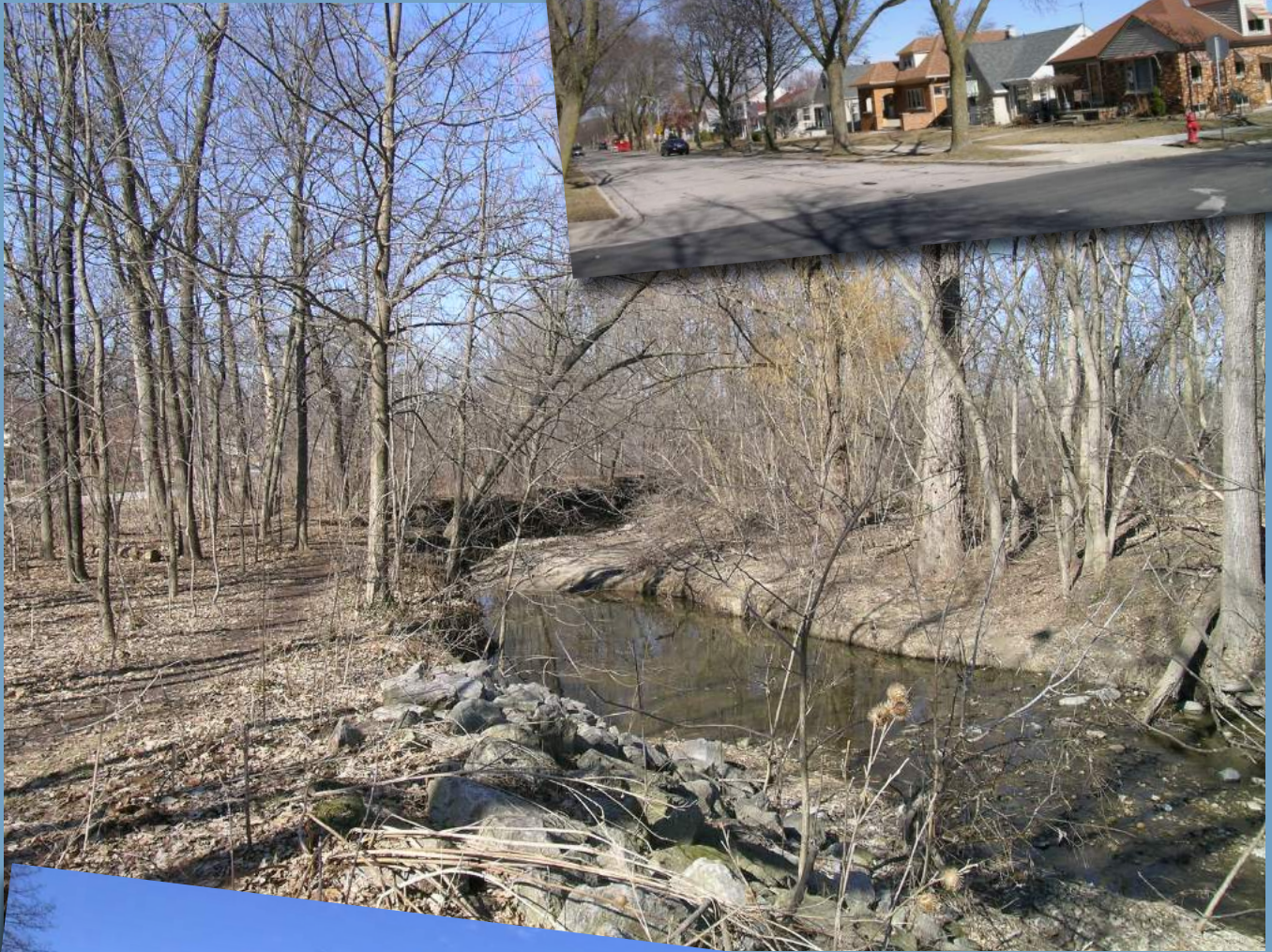
--*Marsha Voeltner*

PHOTOS



Today's neighborhood-43rd St. & Jackson Park Dr.

Today's neighborhood-47th & Manitoba



Today's neighborhood-
Kinnickinnic River near
43rd & Jackson Park Dr.



Today's neighborhood-43rd & Manitoba

Today's neighborhood-Mitchell Manor Senior Living Community (west side)



Today's neighborhood-Manitoba Park



Today's neighborhood-Jackson Park lagoon



Today's neighborhood-Mitchell Manor Senior Living Community on border between West Allis & Jackson Park

For more information on Milwaukee neighborhoods, refer to John Gurda's *Milwaukee, City of Neighborhoods*.

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/9/91/Goodyear-Wingfoot_House-1943-2.JPG