

*Approximate boundaries:*  
N-I-94; S-W. Main St;  
E-S. Hawley Rd; W-S. 70<sup>th</sup> St

# WEST SIDE *Johnson's Woods*

## NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION

Johnson's Woods occupies a fairly small area of flat land and gently rolling hills between the south side of the I-94 and the northern border of West Allis. The main housing types are the bungalow and two-story duplexes built in the early 20th century. The streets follow a grid pattern except for the eastern border that shadows the curve of Hawley Road. This is a high-density neighborhood with houses spaced closely together. The business corridor is along Hawley Road and consists of a few manufacturing companies.

The only area of green space is Burbank Playground that is west of the Burbank Elementary School. See neighborhood photos below.

## HISTORY

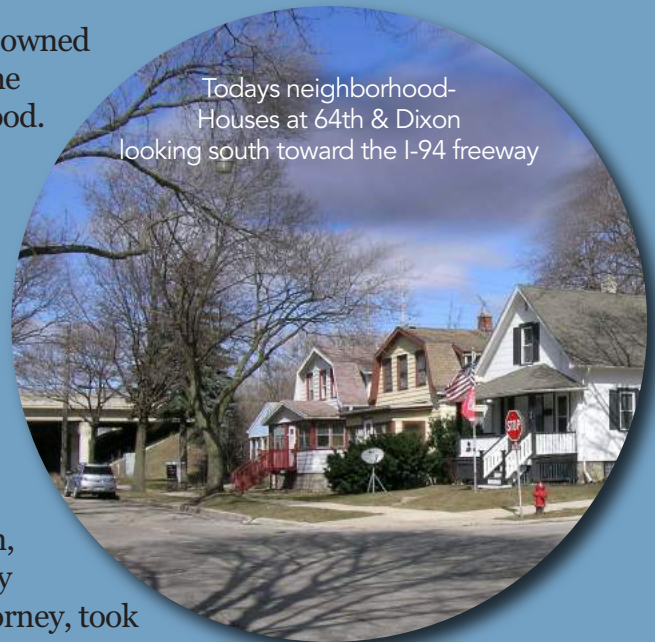
The area owes its name to the Johnson family that once owned the forested land that is today's Johnson's Woods and the southern portion of the Bluemound Heights neighborhood. The land acquisition began with Dr. James Johnson, an Irish immigrant, who came to the Milwaukee area in 1844. He purchased 141 acres of land that are bounded by today's South 60th and South 68th Streets and Fairview Avenue and the Milwaukee Road tracks—an area that was then within the unincorporated Town of Wauwatosa. In addition to having a medical practice, Dr. Johnson intermittently served Milwaukee as an alderman, health commissioner, and school board member.

Dr. Johnson later sold his wooded land to his son, Frederick Johnson, an attorney. Frederick died relatively young in 1900, and his son, James Johnson, also an attorney, took over the land.

The same year that Frederick died, Allis Chalmers was expanding its operations from its small Walker's Point location and purchased 100 acres of farmland at 70th and Greenfield, just south of today's Johnson's Woods. This move would greatly impact the neighborhood's future. The younger James Johnson recognized the potential for his land as a blue collar community and platted the west end of his property in 1915, adding two more subdivisions in 1916 and 1917. He made a decision to offer the narrower, 30-foot lots for sale, anticipating a high density community of workers. However, his plans were disrupted by World War One.

## Early populations

Development of Johnson's Woods soared in the 1920s. The neighborhood quickly became a salad bowl of ethnic populations. Germans moved in from the north and northwest sides of Milwaukee, Poles from the south side, and Irish, Jews, Croatians, Belgians, Bohemians, Slovenians, and French Canadians from the city's center and east side. Residents built closely spaced cottages and bungalows. With jobs widely available, most residents could walk to work. Allis Chalmers was



Today's neighborhood—  
Houses at 64th & Dixon  
looking south toward the I-94 freeway

on its way to becoming the largest industry in Wisconsin with employment exceeding 3,000 workers. At the same time, the City of Milwaukee annexed all of Johnson's Woods between the years of 1927 and 1931.

An example of the diverse families in early Johnson's Woods appears below, in the randomly selected household feature.

### **Johnson's Woods Random Residents (1920s)**

*Household selected randomly from the 1928 City Directory in the Johnson's Woods area (photo and other information found in public records on Ancestry.com)*

#### **The Bogadis**

In 1928, 40-year-old Stephan/Stjepan L. Bogadi, and six of his children (Melia, John, Stephan, Anna, Frank, and George) lived at 6115 W. Dixon. Stephan had recently been widowed from his wife, Antonia Bagadi (nee Bozich). (See earlier photo of the family to the left.)

Both Stephan and Antonia had immigrated to the United States from Gola Croatia, Austria about 15 years earlier. They self-identified as Croatians.

The Bogadis briefly settled in Centerville, Iowa, and Madison, Wisconsin before moving to Milwaukee. The times were good for new immigrants in the city. With jobs

readily available, Stephan found work as a laborer in a steel foundry and later climbed the skill level to become a welder.

The Bogadis moved from Mineral Street to a new subdivision in Johnson's Woods in the early 1920s, where they purchased their home. In 1930, the home was modestly valued at \$1,700. About the time that the Bogadis had purchased their home, Stephan became a naturalized U.S. citizen.

It is not known how long the Bogadis remained in Johnson's Woods. The Great Depression arrived in late 1929, but did not begin to seriously impact Milwaukee until the early to mid-1930s. Records disappear for Stephan Sr. at this time. At least two of his sons (Stephan Jr. and Frank) served in World War Two. Stephan Jr. (the oldest boy in the above photo) was stationed in California during the war, and remained there when the war ended. He died in San Bernadino County, California at age 72. Daughter Milea (later called Millicent) remained in Wisconsin and married a man named Quick. She died in Manitowoc in 1992.



During this early housing boom, no commercial corridor developed in Johnson's Woods. There were no businesses on Hawley Road and the only non-residential building on South 60th Street was Johnson's Woods School. With the arrival of the Great Depression, the neighborhood housing boom came to a halt.

#### *Johnson's Woods after World War Two*

Johnson's Woods experienced a second housing boom immediately following World War Two. Ethnic diversity continued. By 1949, a modest business corridor developed on Hawley Road within the neighborhood's boundaries. See list and notes below.

<i>Addresses on S. Hawley Rd. in 1949</i>	<i>Names of businesses and organizations from the Milwaukee City Directory</i>
308	Spring Hill Cemetery
317	Schmitty's Hall Tavern
326	Anshe Lebovitz Cemetery
403	Ideal Refrigeration Service
490	Dora H. Smith Florist & Gifts
411	Stephen J. Bunich Confectioner
422	Braun's Food Market Groceries & Meats
430	Herbert Siegfried Filling Station
507	Milwaukee Food Mart

#### **Summary and notes from census and other records:**

- The cemeteries dominated the commercial corridor on Hawley. The VA grounds were just east of Hawley.
- Spring Hill Cemetery is technically in the Veteran's Affairs neighborhood to the east, but borders Hawley Rd. A Jewish cemetery, it was established by B'nai B'rith in 1867.
- Schmitty's Hall Tavern may have been run by Milton Schmitty who attended Washington High School in his youth.
- Anshe Lebovitz/Lebowitz Cemetery is also technically in the Veteran's Affairs neighborhood to the east, and is also a Jewish cemetery, but operated by the Orthodox community.
- Dora H. Smith, with the flower shop, lived at the same address as her business. She ran the shop until at least 1960. No doubt the presence of the nearby cemeteries was a catalyst for her business.
- Stephen Bunich, the confectioner, was the son of Slovenian immigrants. He retired in Florida and died in 1996. He had worked as an icer before opening his shop.
- Joseph M. Braun owned the grocery store. He had worked in a brewery before opening his store. He lived in the neighborhood, just a few blocks from his business. He later moved about a mile south into West Allis. While the name appears to be German, both of his parents were born in Ireland.
- Herbert Siegfried, with the gas station, was the son of German immigrants. His father, August, had worked as a clerk in a tool room shop.

The housing boom continued in Johnson’s Woods until the early 1960s when the neighborhood was entirely filled. It continued to attract a diverse population—now including people of color.

### Current populations (as of 2017)

Today, Johnson’s Woods has just over 3,000 residents. Of these, the overwhelming majority are European Americans with ancestry in Germany, Poland, Ireland, France, Slovenia, England, Austria, Holland, Norway, Sweden, and Russia. Just under 1 in 6 residents are Latino (mostly of Mexican ancestry), and about 1 in 15 are African American. There is also a scattering of Asians (including those of Chinese, Indian, Hmong/Lao, and Vietnamese ancestry), American Indians, and people of multiple backgrounds in the neighborhood.

Johnson’s Woods is a lower middle income neighborhood with a median household income of just over \$38,000 a year. The main occupations claimed by residents in the neighborhood are in the fields of administration, production, and sales. Johnson’s Woods has over twice the number of residents in the fields of science and repair than the proportions of Milwaukeeans in other neighborhoods.

Just under half the property units in Johnson’s Woods are owned. Costs of owning a home are slightly higher than in many Milwaukee areas, with select costs for 7 of 10 properties (e.g., mortgages, deeds of trust, contracts to purchase, taxes, insurance) ranging from \$1,001 to \$2,000 a month. Rents are reasonable with over three-quarters of rental units going for \$501 to \$1,000 a month.

### INTERESTING NEIGHBORHOOD FEATURES

- **Iglesa Jesucristo Alfa y Omega**, at 68th and Adler, originally the Church of the Nazarene, built in 1940.
- **Burbank Elementary School**, at 6035 W. Adler, an elementary school with consistently improving test scores and a huge playground area.

### 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.

SELF-GUIDED TOUR OF VA GROUNDS			
When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Daily, daylight	Just north of Zablocki VA Medical Center, 5000 W. National Ave.	A walk through the historic district just north of the Zablocki VA Medical Center, which includes the Soldiers’ Home, barracks building, old fire station, old hospital, Ward Memorial Theater, and more.	Free

ICE FISHING & WINTER SPORTS SHOW			
When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Early Dec., Fri. 12-7pm; Sat. 10am-7pm, Sun. 9am-2pm	Wisconsin State Fair Park, 640 S. 84th, West Allis	Rows of exhibits with products and services dedicated to the ice fishing and winter sports enthusiast.	Free

## HMONG NEW YEAR

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Early Dec., Sat., Sun. 8am-5pm	State Fair Park Expo Center; 8200 W. Greenfield Ave., West Allis	Celebration marks the end of the Hmong harvest season, which ends on November 31, and a time of several days of music, singing, dancing, games, and food.	Adults \$3; free seniors, kids <12 free

## WONDERFUL WORLD OF WEDDINGS

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Early Jan., Sat., Sun. 10am-4:30pm	State Fair Park Expo Center; 8200 W. Greenfield Ave., West Allis	The latest trends in wedding gowns, tuxedos, photographers, florists, music, sample wedding cakes and food tastings, over 100 exhibitors.	\$10, \$8.50 seniors, \$8 military, free kids <13

## MILWAUKEE BOAT SHOW

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Mid Jan., one week, two weekends (except Mon & Tue)	State Fair Park Expo Center; 8200 W. Greenfield Ave., West Allis	Wisconsin's largest boat show with over 400 boats from over 80 manufacturers, yachts, aluminum fishing boats, ski boats, pontoons, runabouts & jet skis, plus dock systems & marine accessories.	\$10, free kids <13 with adult

## GREAT LAKES PET EXPO

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late Jan. 1-5pm	State Fair Park Expo Center; 8200 W. Greenfield Ave., West Allis	Wisconsin's largest charitable event that raises money for companion animals in Wisconsin. Featuring exhibitors including local Wisconsin rescues, pet products and services, great entertainment, and the best shopping for pet lovers.	\$6. Free kids <13 & military w/ID

## WOMAN UP!

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Early Feb. Sat. 10am-4pm	State Fair Park Expo Center; 8200 W. Greenfield Ave., West Allis	A day to celebrate all walks of a woman's life with 250+ vendors and experts in health care, fitness, finance, beauty, education and food as you shop, sample, and listen to presentations.	\$7

## MILWAUKEE/NARI SPRING IMPROVEMENT SHOW

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Mid Feb. Thu-Sun., 12-8pm	State Fair Park Expo Center; 8200 W. Greenfield Ave., West Allis	Home improvement trade show with special attractions and interactive entertainment.	\$10. \$8 seniors, free kids <16 & military w/ID

### MILWAUKEE RV SHOW

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late Feb. Thu. thru Sun.	State Fair Park Expo Center; 8200 W. Greenfield Ave., West Allis	Displays and sales of a wide range of recreational vehicles including pop-up campers, travel trailers, 5th wheels and motorhomes.	\$8, \$7 seniors, free kids <13

### MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL SPORTS SHOW

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Early Mar. Sun. thru Wed., see hours on website	State Fair Park Expo Center; 8200 W. Greenfield Ave., West Allis	Exhibits on fishing, hunting, camping, boating and outdoor adventure.	\$7, free kids <13

### WINTER POWWOW

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Mid Mar., Sat. 11am-10pm, Sun. 11am-6pm	State Fair Park Expo Center; 8200 W. Greenfield Ave., West Allis	American Indian traditional powwow with interactive tribal dances planned to include the general public, with extensive marketplace, traditional foods, and family friendly environment.	\$8, \$6 seniors, free kids <13

### WEDNESDAY NIGHT LIVE

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Jun., Jul., Aug. Wed.'s, 6-11pm	State Fair Park, Budweiser Pavilion, 640 S. 84th St., West Allis	Milwaukee's most popular local bands entertain thousands of fans each week at this indoor/outdoor family friendly concert venue.	Free

### GREEK FEST

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late Jun. Fri./Sat. 11am-11pm, Sun. 11am-9pm	State Fair Park, 640 S. 84th St., West Allis	Festival of Greek food, dance, concerts, marketplace.	Free

### WISCONSIN STATE FAIR--\$2 THURSDAY

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Early Aug., Thu. (promotion ends at 4pm)	State Fair Park, 640 S. 84th St., West Allis	Barnyard animals, crafts, live music, big name entertainers, food, exhibits, and, of course, a midway.	\$2 with 2 non-perishable food items or donation

### WISCONSIN STATE FAIR—FAMILY FUN MONDAY

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Early Aug., Mon. 8am-6pm	State Fair Park, 640 S. 84th St., West Allis	Barnyard animals, crafts, live music, big name entertainers, food, exhibits, and, of course, a midway.	\$5 adults, free kids <12

### HOLIDAY FOLK FAIR INTERNATIONAL

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Mid November, Fri.- Sun.	State Fair Park Expo Center; 8200 W. Greenfield Ave., West Allis	Multicultural festival of music, food, dance, and the arts.	\$10 adults in advance, seniors, kids 6-12, free kids <6

### HORSE EXPO

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Mid Sep., Thu. 7am- 9pm, Fri. 7am-5pm, Sat. 7am-9pm, Sun. 7am-1pm	State Fair Park, 640 S. 84th St., West Allis	Wisconsin State 4-H horse expo including English and Western pleasure, showmanship, trail, and more.	Free

### MAKER FAIRE MILWAUKEE

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late Sep., Sat. 9am-6pm, Sun. 10am-5pm	State Fair Park, 640 S. 84th St., West Allis	Showcase of invention, creativity, tech enthusiasts, crafters, artists, educators, tinkerers, students and others.	Free

### HARVEST FAIR

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late Sep., Fri. 5-11pm, Sat. 9am-11pm, Sun. 9am-5pm	State Fair Park, 640 S. 84th St., West Allis	Autumn fair that features rides, food, games such as pumpkin bowling, and contests such as the pumpkin chuckin'.	Free

### FAMILY FREE DAY AT THE ZOO

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Early Oct., Nov., Dec., Jan., Mar., select Sat.'s 9:30am-4:30pm	Milwaukee County Zoo, 10001 W. Bluemound Rd., Wauwatosa	If you want to stay warm, we have many indoor animal exhibits for your enjoyment. If you're more of the outdoorsy type, you'll also find many outdoor animal exhibits.	Free

### WISCONSIN LUTHERAN ART & CRAFT FAIR

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Early Jul., Sat. 9am-4pm	Wisconsin Lutheran College campus, 8800 W. Bluemound Rd.	Arts & crafts booths, silent auction, music, food.	Free

## NATIONAL NIGHT OUT—ZOO

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
First week Aug., weekday 4- 8pm	Milwaukee County Zoo, 10001 W Bluemound Rd., Wauwatosa	Fun evening of free food, games, rides, animals, chance to dialogue with local police and community organizations,	Free, pre- registration required

These outings are provided courtesy of MECAH Publishing.

## QUOTES FROM RESIDENTS

*If you are a resident of this neighborhood and wish to make an interesting observation about it, please send your quote to [JFLanthropologist@currently.com](mailto:JFLanthropologist@currently.com)*

## PHOTOS



Today's neighborhood-  
Houses on 60th & Adler



Today's neighborhood-Burbank Elementary School



Today's neighborhood-  
Houses on 68th & Adler



Today's neighborhood-  
Burbank Playground at the corner of  
64th & W. Adler St.



Today's neighborhood-  
Iglesia Jesucristo Alfa y Omega

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](mailto:jflanthropologist@currently.com)

