

Approximate boundaries:

N-W. Mill Rd; **S**-W. Appleton Ave;

E-Little Menomonee River Pkwy; **W**-W. Appleton Ave

NORTHWEST SIDE *Little Menomonee Parkway*

NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION

Little Menomonee Parkway is a sparsely populated neighborhood that has a mix of early 20th century house styles such as Tudor and Cape Cod, along with newer late 20th century colonial and ranch styles. The homes are mainly in the northeastern corner of the neighborhood. The rest of the area is woodlands and open fields. There are no businesses in this neighborhood.

The topography of Little Menomonee Parkway is flat to gently rolling hills. Most of the streets follow a rectangular grid except for those that define the eastern and southern borders of the neighborhood. The southern border is West Appleton Avenue that runs at a diagonal from east to west. The eastern border is the Little Menomonee River Parkway just west of the Little Menomonee River that proceeds at a diagonal from north to south.

HISTORY

Over 50 neighborhoods on Milwaukee's northwest side once comprised the Granville Township in Milwaukee County, which extended from Hampton Avenue on the south to County Line Road on the north and 27th Street on the east to 124th Street on the west. The Milwaukee neighborhood of Little Menomonee Parkway was once part of Granville Township. It was named after the river on the neighborhood's eastern border.

Early populations

According to the *Milwaukee Sentinel* (March 22, 1877) there were originally three small settlements in Granville. The first, in 1835, was the family of Jacob Brazelton which included 11 sons. The second was duo Daniel R. Small and W.P. Woodward from Indiana who pitched their tents in the center of the Granville area shortly after the Brazelton family arrived and later built homes. The third group of settlers, the Joseph R. Thomas family and S.C. Enos, arrived shortly after Small and Woodward.

Within a few years a new group arrived from the town of Granville in Washington County, New York. The assemblage included the Evert, Brown, Crippen, Lake, Dutcher, and Norton families. They gave their new home the name of their former home in New York.

But it was not these earliest settlers that established much of the culture of Granville, Township. That role belonged to a wave of Pennsylvania "Dutch" (i.e., Germans) who arrived just a few years later from Telford, Pennsylvania, including the Wambold, Leister, Scholl, Barndt, Price, Bergstresser, Borse, Klein, Martin, Huber, Groll, Horning, and Lewis families. The Pennsylvania Dutch, under the leadership of Samuel Wambold, quickly established the German Evangelical Lutheran and Reformed Church (now known as Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church) in 1847. The following year, the church's pastor, Wilhelm Wrede, called a meeting of local Lutheran ministers at the church. This group would later become the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. A museum of these early synod activities now stands on 107th Street (see outings).



Today's neighborhood-
Houses on N. 105th St.
& W. Lynx Rd.

In the 1840s there were over 200 people living in Granville Township, and the numbers continued to grow. A small Irish community settled on Granville's eastern border to the center of the township. Initially they set up tents, built brush shanties, and log cabins. But during these early years, Granville Township remained strongly German, and more Germans arrived every year.

However, there was one resident in the Little Menomonee River Parkway area in the early years who was somewhat unlike the other residents.

Little Menomonee Parkway resident profile (early 20th century)

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

Virdumarus Nickols

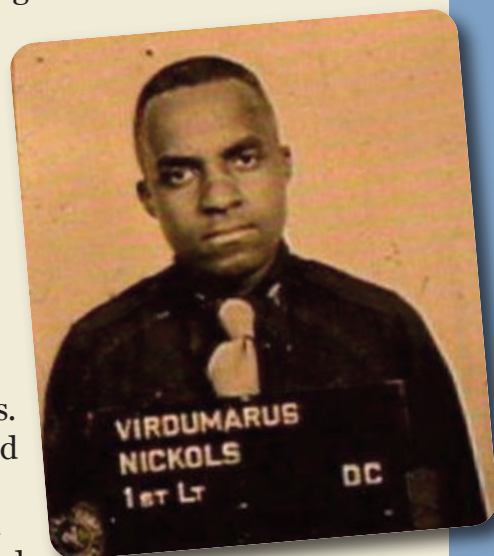
Sometime prior to 1935, Virdumarus Nickols moved to North 106th Street in the Little Menomonee Parkway area. He owned his house, which was valued at \$1,000 in 1940.

Born in Ohio in 1900, Virdumarus graduated from college and became a dentist. As a young man he took an interest in Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) and African Communities League (ACL). The movement spawned by the two organizations promoted a return of diaspora blacks to Africa. Liberia was the chosen base of the effort because of its history of helping the refugee slaves and exiled Africans to re-establish a foothold in their native land. It is not known how long Virdumarus participated in the movement, but later records suggest more of an identification with America.

Sometime along the way, Virdumarus changed directions. He and his family moved to Wisconsin. He married and divorced while establishing a rigorous dental practice. A hard-working man, Virdumarus told the census taker in 1940 that he owned his own practice, had worked 52 weeks in the previous year and 70 hours in the previous week.

When the United States entered World War II, Virdumarus enlisted. He served for the duration of the war as a 1st lieutenant (see his U.S. Army photo¹).

Virdumarus was likely the first African American to purchase a home and settle in Granville Township. It is not known how long he remained there. He died in 1984.



Movement toward annexation

Economic prosperity reigned in Granville, due partially to the work ethic of these early residents. The township remained predominantly rural through the early half of the 20th century. From the late 1800s to World War II Granville was an important center for dairy and truck farming. Resident William Schlapmann owned a creamery that produced 100 pounds a day. Gradually industries began to open in Granville and the area eventually became the most concentrated base of industrial employment in Wisconsin—today including industrial parks and scores of companies.

In 1956 the residents and property owners of Granville were given a choice to consolidate with the City of Milwaukee. Needing services that Milwaukee could offer— especially water--the majority of voters said yes to the referendum. By the 1960s, the western portion of Granville (16.5 square miles) was annexed by Milwaukee and parts of the eastern section consolidated as the Village of Brown Deer. Milwaukee became one of the few large cities in the United States that still had working farms within its boundaries.

Late 20th century

In the second half of the 20th century African Americans began to migrate to the Timmerman West and other former Granville communities. This happened for two reasons: (1) the need for housing following the razing of over 8,000 homes in the African American Bronzeville community in the late 1950s through the mid-1960s (see [Halyard Park neighborhood](#)), and (2) the availability of family-supporting jobs in industry in the former Granville community. As in most German-dominated areas in Milwaukee, the integration of the new population proceeded relatively smoothly. Many African American families were able to purchase homes and move into the middle class.

Unfortunately, the deindustrialization movement that began in the 1980s arrested this course. Manufacturing employment in Milwaukee fell 77 percent, from a peak in 1963 to the present. What had been a working and middle class area on the Northwest Side was in economic decline.

Current populations (as of 2025)

Today there are just over 800 residents in Little Menomonee Parkway. Of these, just under half are European Americans (with Germans still occupying a large proportion of this group), just over one-third are African Americans, and about one-in-12 are Latinos (mostly Mexican). There is also a scattering of Asians (mainly Hmong), people of mixed ethnicity/race, and “others.”

The median household income for residents of Little Menomonee Parkway is just under \$50,000, placing the neighborhood in the lower income stratum. The main occupations claimed by adults are in the fields of sales, administration, and production.

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.

TOUR OF MUSEUM OF WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD (WELS)			
When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
By appointment	Salem Lutheran Landmark Church, lower level, 6814 N. 107th St.	Tour of more than 1,000 artifacts and pictures of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod	Free, but donations welcome

BUTLER FARMERS MARKET

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Early Jun.-mid-Oct., Mon. 12-6pm	Hampton Ave. at 127th St.	Fresh produce from Wisconsin farmers, baked goods, arts, crafts, activities.	Free

GRANVILLE BID CAR, TRUCK, AND BIKE SPECTACULAR

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late Sep., Sun. 10am-3pm	Russ Darrow, 7676 N. 76th St.	Exhibition of iconic custom vehicles.	Free

JULY 4TH CELEBRATION

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
July 4th, 9am-10pm	Noyes Park, 8235 W. Good Hope Rd.	Parade, Doll Buggy, Bike & Trike, and Coaster judging, games, fire-works.	Free

OPEN SWIM

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Daily, 1-5pm, holiday times vary	Noyes Park, 8235 W. Good Hope Rd.	Open swim year-round at indoor pool with diving boards, locker rooms, vending machines.	\$4, \$3 kids <12

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

In *The Golden Years of Yesteryear* by Emily Treichel Boehlke (reprinted in *A History of Granville* by Miriam Y. Bird, 1996), Treichel Boehlke writes about her family's history in Granville from the mid-1800s through the late 20th century. The following are passages from this work.

“When my Grandparents Treichel were first married and lived in their one room cabin, the Indians would stop in and admire their baby. At Grandfather Hackbarth's the Indians set up camps in the woods every spring and fall when they came to do their trading in Milwaukee.”

“Weddings in the 1860s and later were quite different from today. The invitations were hand written by the bride and groom and they were the hosts, not the parents of the bride. The silk material for the brides' dresses was only 18 inches wide, so for a fancy dress, it took 18 to 20 yards of material. It was not unusual for a man to wear his wedding suit 20 to 25 years, or as long as it fitted.”

“... the settlers were having church services at the home of Ernest Zautcke, who had brought a reed organ from Germany to help him with his singing. One of the men could read a text from the Bible and the other religious books which they had brought from across. Mr. Zautcke then

donated land for a church and school on the corner of [today's] Hopkins and Silver Spring Roads. They were served by visiting pastors from Milwaukee and vicinity."

"School [of her parents] was then held at the house of one of the member's house one month and at another one the next month, whoever had a room big enough to seat the children."

"The housewife had to plan well ahead for her household. There was the Arab that would come about once a month with two heavy suitcases full of notions and yard goods for house dresses. When he begged for a night's lodging the housewife would get a spool of thread for payment. Also a man with a big basket of oranges and bananas would come. Bananas were 25 cents a dozen for nice large ones. Later a baker would come once a week with bread and sweets."

"Every mother had to be well-schooled in home remedies. Plants and herbs were gathered in the summer to be dried and stored for the winter, to be used for any and all ailments."

"Grandfather would sit and knit many mittens and stockings for all the grandchildren while Grandma read to him and tended her many plants of which she had quite a variety."

"Even the first street cars were propelled by horse power. There were only 2 lines, one on 3rd Street to Williamsburg, a section of the city at North Avenue and Center and [one] further north (an all-German settlement)."

"In the beginning of the 1900s, there was no Silver Spring Drive, not even a wagon trail west of Hopkins Street. But the plans were made to have a road there, so one of the farmers would ride through the woods with horse and wagon or on horseback as best he could, so it would be legally kept as a driveway to the next mile west."

"During the first World War, all gathering of people was forbidden, due to the spreading of the flu. So at Freistadt Church only every other pew could be sat in, so all the people east of the church came for early services and all those west of the church came for later service. Also all talking and preaching was to be done in English, but Pastor Wehrs insisted on preaching in German as many of his older members could not understand English."

"There were about 12 to 14 neighbors that exchanged labor. This was a hard job for the ladies also, with breakfast at 6, lunch at 9, dinner at 12, another lunch at 3, and supper at sundown. No 8 hour days."

"When the first threshing machine came out the farmers started to raise barley for the Breweries in Milwaukee. My father raised quite a lot of it and we girls had to man the farming mill in the evening when milking was done and our lessons were finished. This was a cold and tiresome job until enough was cleared for a load to be hauled to town the next day."

Quotes from an oral history of the Granville neighborhoods currently being conducted by Urban Anthropology Inc.ⁱⁱ—About THEN.

"I know in the woodland area back when it first started it was called the meadows. I just talked to somebody recently who grew up there. Their experience living there was that it was a very nice area. There was a lot of things for families to do. People who lived in the woodlands areas had to purchase those condominiums. But at some point there might have been a lot of vacancies so the city allowed it to become rental. I think once that happened, things went downhill. There was a lot of troubles with gangs and it had a bad reputation for a while there."

Quotes from the oral history of the Granville neighborhoods—About NOW

“Now I think the mix that’s there today--I think they want to get along. We as the BID did another thing. It’s an arts festival called Grandioso with the multicultural populations in Granville. And we feel that that’s a very positive thing about Granville that we are becoming a place--one of the few in Milwaukee where we have all four different ethnic groups [sic]. The BID’s position is that nobody ever celebrates the multiculturalism in Milwaukee. We always run around celebrating our own little thing. So we’re trying to build this--if you want multiculturalism come to the Granville area. And I think that’s one of our strengths and not so what people used to be our weakness. Now we’re really multicultural. We just have to work on that inclusion piece to get all the people--all the different nationalities working in our businesses and thriving.”

“For example, my neighborhood is mixed upwardly mobile white and African American government workers. Down in the poor neighborhood in the 100s there are people from different ethnic backgrounds but probably the same socioeconomic status. Blue collar old cars.”

ii 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-Houses on W. Appleton Ave.



Today's neighborhood-
Houses on N. 102nd St.



Today's neighborhood-
View looking south
at the end of N. 102nd St.



Today's neighborhood-
Houses on N. 102nd St. & W. Bender Rd.



Today's neighborhood-Houses on N. 106th St. & W. Lynx Rd.

ⁱ Photo attribution: <https://www.facebook.com/pg/virdumarus/about/>

For more information on the history of Granville, refer to Miriam Y. Bird's *A History of Granville Township*.

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: JFLanthropologist@currently.com