

Approximate boundaries:
N-W. Good Hope Rd; S-N. Fond du Lac Ave;
E-N. 99th St; W-N. 107th St

NORTHWEST SIDE *Mack Acres*

NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION

Mack Acres is a sparsely populated residential neighborhood that has mainly mid- to late 20th century ranch style houses interspersed with a few Tudors. Most of the houses are set back from the street on large, widely spaced lots. Mack Acres has no business corridor.

The topography of Mack Acres is hilly with gently rolling to moderately steep inclines. Some streets follow a rectangular grid but a few wind and others follow the diagonal of the Fond du Lac Freeway at the southwestern border of the neighborhood. Most streets do not have sidewalks. There is no public green space but much of the northern part of the area consists of open fields with a few trees. See photos below.

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 Mack Acres, named after its developer Rudy Mack, was once part of Granville Township. (See his profile below.)

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).



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.

Movement toward annexation

Economic prosperity reigned in Granville, due partially to the work ethic of the 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. The Mack Acres neighborhood was just developing in the 1950s. See below.

Mack Acres resident profile (1950s)

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

Rudy Mack

Mack Acres owes its current existence to a building contractor named Rudolph Mack (“Rudy”). Rudy, born in 1896, was raised in and around the Granville area, living at various times on Hopkins, Fond du Lac, and in North Milwaukee (*see his boyhood photo*¹). He was the son of German immigrants Rudolph Mack Sr. and Louisa Reichow.

Rudolph Sr. was an industrious man. While living with his family on Hopkins, he opened a grocery store. A decade later he opened his own building construction business. As Rudy Jr. got into his teens he worked as a carpenter for the firm. But in 1918, while the United States was in World War I, Rudy enlisted, serving in the U.S. Army for the duration of the conflict. When Rudy returned, he continued working in his father's contracting business, and eventually married a woman with the same first name as his mother, Louisa Schroeder. During the Great Depression, when the building trade came to a standstill, Rudy took a supervisory job for a government program, possibly the WPA.

At the close of the Depression and World War II, the building trade began to soar. Rudy resuscitated his father's contracting business and developed the subdivision that would later be known as Mack Acres. One of the streets in Mack Acres was originally named Mack Avenue. However, in 1956, the homeowners petitioned for a name change, arguing that it was too closely identified with Mack Trucks. Today the street is Beechwood Avenue. Rudy died in 1971.



Late 20th century

In the second half of the 20th century, African Americans began to migrate to the neighborhood. 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 2021)

Today there are fewer than 200 residents in Mack Acres. Of these, slightly over half are African Americans and about 4 in 10 are European Americans (the largest ancestry groups being German and people of mixed European backgrounds). There is also a scattering of Latinos (all of Mexican ancestry), Asians (mostly of Hmong extraction), American Indians, indigenous Africans, and people of multiple or “other” racial ancestry in the area.

The median household income for residents of Mack Acres is just over \$76,000, placing the neighborhood in the upper middle income stratum and making it one of the wealthiest neighborhoods in Milwaukee. The main occupations claimed by adults are in the fields of production, management, and sales. There are over three times the number of adult residents in the field of law enforcement than the proportions in other Milwaukee neighborhoods.

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.

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

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, fireworks.	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

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

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.

“Everything keeps coming back I think to the church primarily. I mean I wasn’t a member, but I think my mother was a member of the church of Holy Mother’s and I know that existed and they had some social activities that they put on but that was primarily with the church.”

“The Salem Lutheran Church was really important to this and adjoining neighborhoods. I think it still is.”

“I remember the name of the [African American] family that did live in the community. The name was Nebel, and their father ran a pretty successful landscaping business. So he was pretty well known in the area. And I have to say, at least to my knowledge, I don’t recall any specific negative comments toward them. Although there’s certainly racism at this time with Hmong people. But I don’t recall in that case anything specifically.”

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

“Speaking of my neighborhood, the similarities I see are stable families with higher paying jobs. The average income of my neighborhood is well over \$100,000 per year. My home sticks out because the church pays for my house. Regardless of race there is that income level and that stability.”

“We have a ton of families in the district and everyone is trying to attain an American dream. Buy your house, raise your family, get a good education, and enjoy life. I think that is the common theme in the neighborhood; everyone is just trying to do that with the resources that are available. Not within their homes but within the district itself. That’s what makes it so cumbersome, but in a good way to really try to make that happen.”

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. Green Tree Rd.

Today's neighborhood-
Houses on W. Vera Ave.
east of N. 102nd St.



Today's neighborhood-
Houses on W. Leon Terrace (1)



¹ Photo of Rudy Mack as a boy from public records at Ancestry.com.

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



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