

Approximate boundaries:

N-W. Grange Ave; **S**-W. College Ave;
E-Mitchell Int Airport, **W**-I-94

FAR SOUTH SIDE *Maitland Park*

NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION

Maitland Park is a neighborhood west of Mitchell International Airport. The area east of South 13th Street to the airport is occupied by industrial enterprises or is an empty, fenced-off area connected to the airfield. The southwest corner of the neighborhood houses a park and ride lot. The general topography of Maitland Park is flat and interspersed with gently rolling hills.

The main home architectural style is the ranch house, with a few older duplexes on South 13th. The neighborhood has a park, also named Maitland Park, which is a 23-acre commons with a tot lot and wooded area with a creek running through it. The streets generally follow a grid pattern except for two curving avenues south of the park.

HISTORY

Maitland 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.

Today's neighborhood-Maitland Park



Maitland Park specifics

The neighborhood of Maitland Park is all about airports. First, most of its area serves Mitchell International Airport, which was founded in the years just prior to the Great Depression. In 1926, the Milwaukee County Board approved \$150,000 to purchase a new airport facility. The land was owned by Thomas Hamilton, a local aviator who operated a propeller manufacturing business and small airport. The first terminal opened on the Hamilton Airport site in July of 1927.

During the late depression years, a two-story terminal building was constructed by the Works Progress Administration (WPA). In 1941, the name of the Milwaukee County Airport was changed to General Mitchell Field after Milwaukee's military advocate, Brigadier General William "Billy" Mitchell. By 1955 the airfield included over 1,500 acres of land for runways and taxiways—some of this in the Maitland Park area.

But the neighborhood had another airfield legacy, and this accounts for its name. During the same years that Mitchell International Airport began its development, another airfield was founded—this one on the banks of the Milwaukee Bay near the old Milwaukee Road station—in the area of today's Summerfest grounds. The airport was named Maitland Field—possibly named after the British military aviator, Edward Maitland. As the *Milwaukee Journal* reported in 1930, "No other large city is said to have the natural advantage presented to Milwaukee, by which an airplane can taxi up to a railroad terminal and discharge its passengers within a few feet of a waiting train." However, other newspaper articles that same year questioned the safety of having an airport so close to picnickers and children on the beach.

Maitland Field became the site of a horrific plane collision in 1933, when Capital Airlines Flight 19 (DC-3) was descending to approach the airport at the same time that a Cessna 140 was taking off. Neither aircraft altered its course, and the two collided. While the Cessna 140 was destroyed by impact, the DC-3 managed a safe landing.

Maitland Field remained in operation for nearly 30 years before giving way to a Nike Missile installation, established during the height of 1950s Cold War tensions.

Post World War II

The neighborhood of Maitland Park did attract a few settlers in the early 20th century—mainly on South 13th Street. But it wasn't until the end of World War II that the housing market began to pick up in the area. By the late 1950s Maitland Park had few through streets, just under 50 residences, and a very modest commercial corridor. All of the businesses were on South 13th Street. Below is a list from 1959.

<i>Addresses on S. 13th in Maitland Park area in 1959</i>	<i>Names of businesses from the Milwaukee City Directory</i>
5501	Holler Service Station
5557	Harvey A. Tingwall Sheet Metal
5640	Bill's Roofing & Siding Service Contractor
5707	Amrhein Greenhouse

<i>Addresses on S. 13th in Maitland Park area in 1959</i>	<i>Names of businesses from the <u>Milwaukee City Directory</u></i>
5924	Lake Incinerator Company
6044	Lemley Wood Products Company
6280	Jimmy Joy's Accordion Inn Tavern

Among the early settlers in the Maitland Park area were Poles, Irish, Germans, French Canadians, Belgians, Austrians, and a handful of Italians. Below is one family example.

Maitland Park family profile (1960s)

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

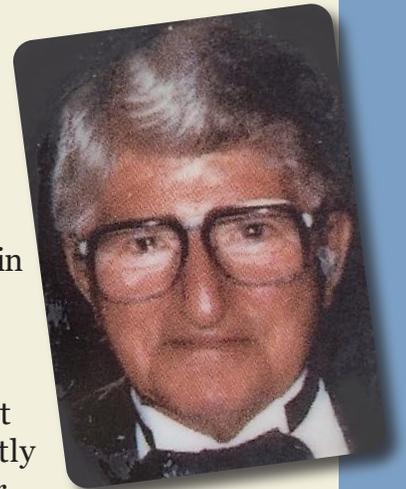
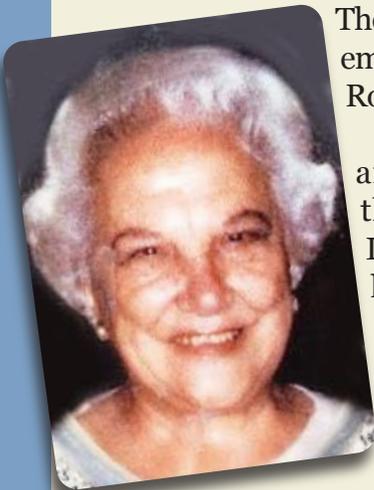
The Albertis

Sometime in the 1950s, the Albertis moved to 5633 South 13th Street. The parents, Rocco Anthony Alberti and Antonina (“Lena”) Madeline Alberti (nee Vetrano) had emigrated from Italy in the early 20th century. Like many Italian immigrants of that time period, the couple settled in Milwaukee’s Third Ward.

They lived on Jefferson Street, where Rocco advanced in employment from garbage collection to a teamster. Rocco had attended Lincoln High School.

While living in the Third Ward, Rocco and Lena had two children. It is very likely that the Albertis left the Third Ward when the mostly Italian residents were being evicted from their homes during the era of freeway building and urban renewal that began in the 1950s. Those two programs essentially dissolved Milwaukee’s Little Italy settlement and razed their community parish, the Blessed Virgin of Pompei—otherwise known as the “little pink church.”

The couple would have been middle aged and the children in their late teens when the Albertis moved to the Maitland Park area. Records suggest that the couple remained on South 13th into their elderly years and perhaps until their deaths.



Current populations (as of 2021)

Today, Maitland Park has just over 1,000 residents. Slightly over 6 in 10 are European Americans (most still of Polish and ancestry, but with a substantial number claiming Irish and Italian descent). Just over one-quarter are Latinos (mostly Mexican, but including quite a few Puerto Ricans). There is also a scattering of Asians (mainly Filipinos, Lao, Korean, and Japanese), American Indians, African Americans, Arabs, Jordanians, and people of multiple backgrounds in the area. There are significantly more women than men in the neighborhood.

Nearly two-thirds of the property units in Maitland Park are owned. The price of home ownership is typical for Milwaukee. Select costs for just over half the homes (e.g., mortgages, deeds of trust, insurance, taxes, contracts to purchase) range from \$1,001 to \$1,500 a month. Rents are modest, with nearly two-thirds of the units going for \$501 to \$1,000 a month.

Over half of the households in Maitland Park fall into the lower middle to middle income levels (with annual household incomes ranging from \$25,001 to \$75,000). The largest number of occupations claimed by residents are in the fields of administration, sales, production, and education. Three times as many residents list farming as their chief occupation than the proportions in other Milwaukee areas.

Gardening (or as some apparently say—farming) is a major hobby among Maitland 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 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.

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.¹—about THEN

“The churches were the big gathering places when I was a kid, and in my Catholic church there was a Christian mother’s group, and a men’s group. There weren’t neighborhood associations. My father belonged to something that was called the Excelsors. It was a social club and they were all Polish. They stayed together for years.”

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

“The Islamic Society of Milwaukee [in the Mitchell West neighborhood of the Garden District] holds regular open houses where community members from the surrounding community are invited in and we have had many people come in and say, ‘Oh I went to school here’ when it was the New Road School, which was the name of this building before it was closed in the 1970s, and generally these open houses have been very well received. We also participate in neighborhood improvement projects including working with businesses concerned about beautification in the Garden District. And we have voluntarily made improvements to the two major properties that we own in the district.”

“Today there is the Garden District Neighborhood Association. I also helped set up maybe 15 different neighborhood associations and two business associations—one on South 13th Street and one around the airport—both still exist and are doing some fantastic things. They basically tax themselves so they can set up improvement activities like Gateway to Milwaukee that does flowerbeds and things on 13th Street between Layton and Howell. They’ve done billboards and banners and holiday wreaths and decorative garbage cans. The group on 27th Street maintains the streetscape that runs on 27th. I attend every one of their meetings.”

“The neighborhood has had a large population of police and firefighters – and they didn’t live a lot downtown. Mainly white policeman and firefighters. But the residency requirement has been lifted, so in the next 10 years, most of the city employees will most likely have scattered.”

¹¹ 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-Maitland Park



Today's neighborhood-
Industrial Building on S. 13th

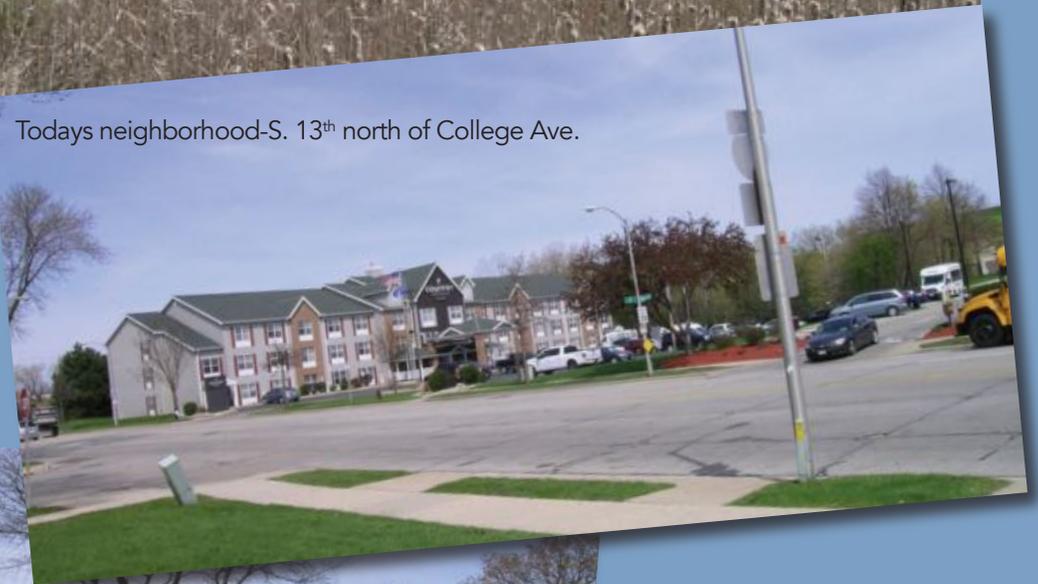


Today's neighborhood-
Maitland Park looking south
to S. Avalon St.

Today's neighborhood-Maitland Park, view looking south from the bridge



Today's neighborhood-S. 13th north of College Ave.



Today's neighborhood-IDEAL School



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