

Approximate boundaries:
N-N. Leon Terrace; S-W. Mill Rd;
E-N. Leon Terrace; W-N. 107th St

NORTHWEST SIDE *Maple Tree*

NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION

Maple Tree is a moderate to low-density residential neighborhood that has mainly mid-to late 20th century two-story colonial residences as well as a large number of multi-unit apartments. There is a business corridor along West Fond du Lac Avenue in the northern part of the neighborhood, south of Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church.

The topography of Maple Tree is hilly with gently rolling to moderately steep inclines. Few streets follow a rectangular grid. Most are winding and others proceed at a diagonal following the Fond du Lac Freeway on the eastern border of the neighborhood. Many streets do not have sidewalks. There is no public green space in Maple Tree, but there are a few places that have large open fields. See neighborhood 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 Maple Tree was once part of Granville Township.

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-
Apartments on W. Fond du Lac Ave.
south of N. Bourbon St.

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.

See the profile of Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church's first full time pastor and family below.

Maple Tree resident family (mid-19th century)

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

The Siekers

Both Johann Heinrich and Julie Sieker were born in Baden, Germany and immigrated to the United States with their families as children.

Johann, born 1839, and his family settled in Newton, Wisconsin. He was the son of Christian Sieker and Christina Louisa Sieker (nee Schaefer). He had 11

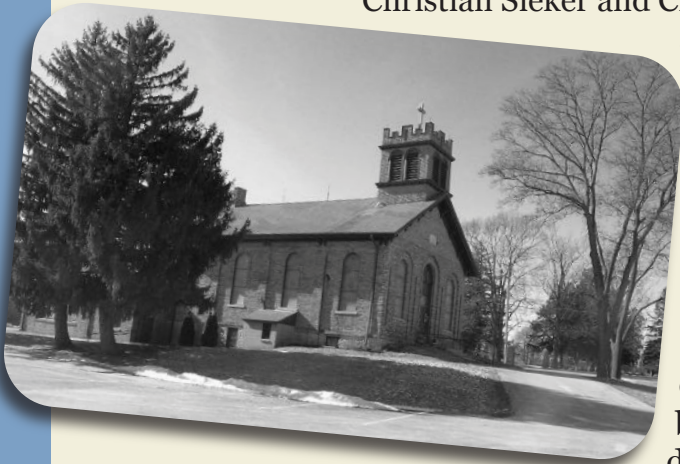
siblings. Committed to a spiritual life, Johann attended and graduated from Gettysburg Seminary in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. He received the call in 1861 to a small log cabin church in Granville, then known as "The Landmark Church." He became the first pastor to come out of the newly organized Wisconsin Synod, which had just been founded at this church.

The same year that Johann received the call to Granville, he married Julie Streissguth, born in 1838. The couple would remain childless during their six years of service in Granville but

oversaw the building of the current house of worship, Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church, at 6814 North 107th Street in today's Maple Tree neighborhood (*see photo*).

Johann and Julie left Granville for St. Paul, Minnesota in 1867 and served the Minnesota Synod until 1876. There the couple had six children--three boys and three girls.

The Siekers spent their last years of service in New York City, where Johann helped found the Concordia Collegiate Institute. Johann died in New York at age 65 in 1904.



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. 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.

Below is a list of businesses that were on West Fond du Lac within today’s Maple Tree neighborhood just after annexation. See notes below.

<i>Addresses on W. Fond du Lac in 1966/67</i>	<i>Businesses and organizations from <u>Milwaukee City Directory</u></i>
10000	Fonda Company Gas Station Fonda Nursery
10136	Schwister Ford Inc. Automobiles
10212	Eddie’s Beer and Liquor Store
10354	Green Tree Beauty Salon
10701	Reverend Edgar G. Bletcher
10703	West Granville Presbyterian Church

Summary and notes:

- This was not exactly a neighborhood business corridor, but rather one catering mainly to the growing use of the auto in the 1960s
- Both Schwister Ford and Eddie’s Beer and Liquor were owned by the Schwister family—Eugene and Edwin Schwister respectively.
- The West Granville Presbyterian Church is still in operation and still uses the name of West Granville.

Late 20th century

In the second half of the 20th century a wave of African Americans began to migrate to Maple Tree 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 2021)

Today there are just under 2,500 residents in Maple Tree. Of these, over three-quarters are African Americans and about 1 in 7 are European Americans (with the largest ancestry group people of mixed European backgrounds). There is also a scattering of Latinos (mostly of Mexican ancestry), Asians (mostly of Indian and Pakistani background), and people of multiple racial or “other” racial ancestry in the area.

The median household income for residents of Maple Tree is just under \$40,000, placing the neighborhood in the lower middle income stratum. The main occupations claimed by adults are in the fields of administration, sales, and management. There are over twice the number of adult residents in the fields of healthcare support and construction than the proportions in other Milwaukee neighborhoods. The neighborhood has a large number of workers in family businesses and many self-employed, relative to Milwaukee generally.

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.¹—About THEN.

“When I got to the church in ‘87, the church was an all-white church in an all-black neighborhood. It was a church that was 70 percent over the age of 70 and 70 percent widows. The congregation was all white but the neighborhood was all black. The neighborhood went from predominantly African American to a mix with a lot of Latinos.”

“I mentioned probably St. Catherine’s, which was the Catholic school, and I mentioned another one that was not too far, Lady of Good Hope, was another Catholic school. That was in Milwaukee at the time a few miles away. And there was another Catholic school in Menominee falls--St. Mary’s, I believe it was. Salem Lutheran was the closest Lutheran church in school that I can remember right now.”

“I think Salem Lutheran was a pretty big deal back in old Granville. That and St. Catherine’s. The Wisconsin Synod came out of Salem. They have always been leaders.”

“You know, speaking to that era I guess I would have to say that there were [sic] nothing at all in terms of differences between the ethnic groups. I mean again I’m speaking German and some were Polish, but not many Irish. I guess I would have to say that it never made any impression

on me that there were any differences between the ethnic groups. Maybe there was some more noticeable differences perhaps more of the religious groups. There was primarily Catholic and Lutheran.”

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

“I was actually assigned here. I went to a seminary in Mequon Wisconsin, and when I was attending that seminary that’s when I did my teaching internship here at Salem. Then upon graduation they just assign you to a church and this happened to be the church where I was assigned.”

“Going back when my kids were young, I think school was more of a common bond--mainly through schools. I think we all kind of sidle ourselves in the particular cultures or maintain our own values. In fact, the neighborhood association tried to do something with it where we tried to have a neighborhood cookout a couple times and it didn’t do very well--trying to bring that togetherness. Otherwise there wasn’t a lot of crossover or sharing that I could think of.”

ⁱ 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-W. Kiehnau Ave. & N. Bourbon St.



Today's neighborhood-Apartments on W. Fond Du Lac Ave. south of N. Bourbon St.



Today's neighborhood-W. Fond du Lac Ave. north of N. Bourbon St.



Today's neighborhood-N. 106th St. & W. Jonen St.



Today's neighborhood-Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church

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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