

Approximate boundaries:
N-W. Center St; S-W. North Ave;
E-N. Sherman Blvd; W-N. 38th St

NORTHWEST SIDE *Metcalfe Park*

NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION

Metcalfe Park is a moderate to high population density neighborhood. Most of the houses are wood frame, two-story duplexes and bungalows spaced tightly together. There are many empty lots throughout the neighborhood. A few of these have been transformed into pocket parks.

A portion of the neighborhood between 30th Street and 32nd Street is heavily industrial. The Master Lock Company occupies a large part of this area just south of Center Street. The main business corridor is along West North Avenue.

Green Space in the neighborhood includes empty lots, pocket parks, and two City of Milwaukee playgrounds-- Metcalfe and Butterfly Parks. The topography of the Metcalfe Park neighborhood is generally flat.

HISTORY

Metcalfe Park, as a Milwaukee neighborhood, came into existence in 1990 when Mayor John Norquist and the City of Milwaukee carved out the neighborhood's current boundaries of 27th to 38th and North to Center and called it Metcalfe Park. The neighborhood was named after Ralph Metcalfe, an African American gold medalist in track in the 1932 Olympics who later graduated from Marquette University and went on to a political career in Chicago.

Early population

Germans had been in Milwaukee since the early half of the 19th century. Settling mainly west of the Milwaukee River, they reached the North Division area about a mile east of today's Metcalfe Park in the 1870s. As settlers continued to move west, industry began to develop along North 30th Street next to the Milwaukee Road railroad tracks. Access to the new jobs in turn attracted more residents to the area. Between 1890 and 1910 the industrial corridor grew to become one of the greatest concentrations of industry in Milwaukee, second only to the Menomonee Valley.

Residents who built homes in today's Metcalfe Park area could walk to work. And more local industry would arrive in the early decades of the 20th century. In 1939, Master Lock, which today is one of the nation's foremost producers of padlocks, safes, and combination locks, moved to its current location at 2600 N. 32nd.

North Avenue

Industry was not the only livelihood of Metcalfe Park residents. Many found their way into small businesses, particularly on North Avenue. And while the plurality of shopkeepers had German ancestry, the proprietors along the commercial corridor comprised a polyglot of ethnicities. These included Germans, Chinese, Croats, Russians, Jews, Austrians, Bohemians, French Canadian, Hungarians, French, and Poles.

The following chart lists businesses on North Avenue between 27th and 35th Streets in 1936. See summary and notes below.



<i>Addresses on W. North Ave. in 1936</i>	<i>Businesses, offices, and organizations from the Milwaukee City Directory</i>
2708	Irma's Style Shop (Kozary)
2712	Louis Himmeireicht Tavern
2713	Evarist L. Brill Jeweler
2717	Dralle-Bauer Paper Company
2719	Carl W. Dralle Groceries and Meats
2722	Badger Paint and Hardware Store
2724	Henry Berg Tavern
2725	Don's Coffee Stop Restaurant Harry's Barber Shop
2728	Powers Millinery
2729	North Avenue News Company Books
2729A	Elizabeth A. Pernusch Nurse
2732	William Klug Furniture Store
2733	Lola's Beauty Salon
2801	Chris K. Reamer Tavern
2804	Robert J. Lempke Billiards
2808	Louis Raap & Sons Printer
2810	Henry Lee Laundry
2811	William F. Grotian Physician
2812	Berhard & Gehm Barbers
2812B	R.J. Ewald Fruit Syrups Products
2816	Roberts Fur Company
2817	Johnson's Battery Products
2821	Alf Roth Tavern
2822	George Garen's Men's Furnishings
2825	Raymond Bohnert Shade Shop
2829	Laurence C. York Shoe Repair
2831	John M. Grauvogel Drugs
2900	Arthur J. Rahn Tavern

<i>Addresses on W. North Ave. in 1936</i>	<i>Businesses, offices, and organizations from the Milwaukee City Directory</i>
2901	Franz C. Kundmann Bakery
2903	Louise S. Ivey Astrologer
2904	Hahn Plumbing Company
2905	Wonderene Company Chemists
2913	Edward W. Lemke Delicatessen
2914-2920	Krause Motor Company Automobiles
2915	Anthony Starich Auto Repair
2923	ABC Sign Company Leward Chauncey Real Estate Company
2930	William Helm Barber
2932	Keller's Service Station
3001	Joseph A. Bauer Restaurant
3010	Wadhams Filling Station
3013	Anchor Oil Company
3014	North Avenue Fuel Company
3037	North Auto Exchanges Used Cars
3038	Arnold A. Steil Tavern
3042	Clarence O. Jordans Barber
3047	Schwenger-Hirsch Autos Inc.
3049	Java Coffee Cup Restaurant
3051	Peerless Dye Works
3052	Everet E. Kelch Tavern
3060	Frank J. Appelt Tavern
3100	Woods Laundry Inc.
3101	John Jakum Shoe Store
3105	Paramount Bakeries
3111	Walter H. Becker Groceries and Meats
3112	Alvin M. Goodnetter Used Autos
3113	American Food Company Restaurant

<i>Addresses on W. North Ave. in 1936</i>	<i>Businesses, offices, and organizations from the Milwaukee City Directory</i>
3115	Jack E. Peters Tavern
3116	North Avenue Auditorium North Avenue Bowling Alleys First Spiritual Alliance Church
3118	Edward Sauve Barber
3119	Junck Brothers Plumbers
3120	North Avenue Auditorium Café
3131-3125	North Sales Company Autos
3124	Frick Service Signs Contractors
3127	Edward Siegel Barber
3130	Public Fruit Market Inc.
3131	Fred W. Reinke Hardware
3200	Reichow-Roghan Furniture Company
3209	Hall-Chevrolet Company Autos
3212	Louis Zamsky Shoe Repair
3214	Edward Dann Tailor
3215	Leo J. Vogen Jeweler
3217	Fernwood Restaurant
3218	Western Metal and Spinning Company
3220	Frank Luedtke Tavern
3221	Frank Hauser Tavern
3223	Alex Meskol Drugs
3224	Ella Miller Restaurant
3227	Milwaukee Paint Products Inc.
3229-3231	Frank Stamm Tavern
3229	Abraham J. Levin Physician Frederick J. Schneider Dentist Milford E. Harder Dentist
3230	Peters Famous Bakery Products
3232	Alf M. Bastion Tavern

<i>Addresses on W. North Ave. in 1936</i>	<i>Businesses, offices, and organizations from the Milwaukee City Directory</i>
3233	My Dollar Cleaners
3301	Gustav A. Steinborn Barber
3302	Tivoli Theatre
3306	Soldier Boy Ice Cream Bar, Inc.
3310	Ming Lee Laundry
3313	Gust Heinnemann Bakery
3314	Robert Hartzheim Tavern
3316	Eddie's Tivell Restaurant
3317	Kilbourn Household Furniture Company
3318	Badger Paint and Hardware Co.
3321	George Graf Meats
3324	Comet Theatre
3325	Joseph Schlaeger Men's Furnishings
3328	Charles Dewers Confectioner
3329	Joseph Kilbert Shoe Repair
3333	Samuel Eichenbaum Fruits
3400	T.C. Esser Paints Company Russel Hubert Dentist
3401	Josephine L. Fischer Confectioner
3402	DeLuxe Hat Shop and Cleaners
3403	Kehr Kandy Kitchens
3405	A & P Tea Company
3406	J & R Motor Supply Company
3408	Nislev Drapery and Curtain Shop
3409	George J. Rohn Meats
3410	Empire Hat Shop
3413	Marrs Kandy Kitchen
3414	Midwest Radio Company
3415	Stanz Dairy Store

<i>Addresses on W. North Ave. in 1936</i>	<i>Businesses, offices, and organizations from the Milwaukee City Directory</i>
3416	Artistle Gift Shop
3417	Trianan Restaurant
3418	Economy Liquor Store
3421	Northwest Fruit Market
3423	William P. Hug Real Estate
3424	Goller-Stein Company Men's Furnishings
3425-3427	J.C. Penney Company Department Store
3428	Trivoli Hat Shop
3429	E.G. Shinner Meats
3430	Baldauf Building Baldauf Drugs Medicine Manufacturer The Borolatum Company Robert Miller Photographer Erwin Rice Physician
3432	Walgreen Drug Store
3433	Kroger Grocery

Summary and notes from U.S. Census and other public records.

- Technically, only those businesses on the north side of the street (even numbers) were within today's Metcalfe Park neighborhood. The odd-numbered businesses were technically part of Midtown and Walnut Hill neighborhoods.
- Despite being at the height of the Great Depression, W. North Ave. was absolutely teeming with business. Between 27th and 35th Streets there were only four vacant store fronts.
- As in most Milwaukee neighborhoods prior to 1970, few shopkeepers had graduated from high school. Most were also immigrants or children of immigrants. In addition, most shopkeepers lived at the addresses of their stores or within a block of them.
- The needs of Metcalfe Park residents were well met by this stretch of businesses. Between 27th and 35th Streets, there were 14 food stores (grocers, butchers, confectioners, fruit markets, delis, bakeries), 4 drug stores, 3 healthcare providers, 3 cleaners, 3 hardware stores, and 7 barbers.
- This stretch of North Avenue had 14 taverns. Of the proprietors whose census information could be found, most were German. Arthur J. Rahn, Frank Luedtke, Frank Stamm, and Everet E. Kelch were the sons of German immigrants; and Arnold A. Steil and Joseph Hauser were the grandsons of German immigrants. Proprietor Henry Berg was a Hungarian immigrant.

- Despite being at the height of the Great Depression, leisure time activities were abundant on North Ave. Besides the 14 taverns, the street had a bowling alley, 2 theatres, 8 restaurants, and a billiards parlor. The two theatres were probably vaudeville venues transitioning to movie theaters.
- Irma Kozary, with the style shop, appears to have been an immigrant from Hungary.
- Evarist L. Brill, the jeweler, was an anomaly on the street in that he was not an immigrant or son of immigrants. He had also graduated from high school.
- Carl W. Dralle, the grocer, was the son of German immigrants.
- Elizabeth A. Pernusch, the nurse, was the daughter of an Austrian immigrant. She later married a man named Clarence Burns. She had completed high school, but nothing beyond that, which was not uncommon for nurses of that time.
- Robert J. Lempke, with the billiards parlor, was a German immigrant.
- Louis Raap, the printer, was the son of German immigrants. Typical of the shopkeepers, he'd completed the 7th grade.
- There were at least two Chinese laundries on this stretch of North Ave. One was run by Henry Lee, born in China in 1890, and the other by Ming Lee, also born in China.
- Raymond Bohnert, with the shade shop, was the son of German immigrants.
- George Garens, with the men's clothing store, was the son of a German immigrant.
- Lawrence C. York, the shoe repairman, was the son of a French immigrant mother.
- Franz C. Kundmann, the baker, was an immigrant from Austria.
- See the profile of Louise Ivey below.
- Anthony Starich, the auto repairman, was born in MN, the son of immigrants from Yugoslavia (possibly Slovenian). He'd worked as a blacksmith helper before opening his own shop.
- Edgar F. Neveau, the barber, was the grandson of immigrants from French Canada.
- Joseph A. Bauer, with the restaurant, was the son of immigrants from Austria.
- John Jakum, with the shoe store, was also an immigrant from Austria.
- Walter H. Becker, the grocer, was the grandson of immigrants from Prussia. Walter moved to CA by 1940.
- Edward Sauve, the barber, was an immigrant from French Canada.
- The Junck brothers, the plumbers, were sons of Austrian immigrants. They had lived on 27th and North since before 1910.
- Fred W. Reinke, with the hardware store, was the son of German immigrants.

- Louis Zamsky, the shoe repairman, was a Yiddish-speaking immigrant from Russia. He was an anomaly on the street because he'd completed high school.
- Edward Dann, the tailor, was an immigrant from Germany.
- Leo J. Vogen, the jeweler, was from IA. He was not an immigrant or a son of an immigrant.
- Alex Meskol, with the drugstore, was the son of Russian (possibly Jewish) immigrants.
- George Graf, the butcher, was an immigrant from Germany.
- Joseph Schlaeger, with the men's store, was a Jewish immigrant from Russia. Typical of the other shopkeepers, he'd completed the 6th grade.
- Charles Dewers, the confectioner, was born in Maryland, the son of German immigrants.
- Joseph Kilbert, the shoe repairman, was an immigrant from Bohemia.
- Samuel Eichenbaum, with the fruit store, was a Jewish immigrant from Poland.
- Josephine L. Fischer, the confectioner, was the daughter of German immigrants.
- William P. Hug, the real estate agent, was the son of a German immigrant. Like almost all the other business proprietors, he had never attended high school.
- Erwin Rice, the physician, was the son of Austrian immigrants. Like most of the healthcare professionals on the street, he'd completed college and more.

See a profile of one of the North Avenue merchants on the following below.

Merchant profile (Great Depression era)

(Information from census and other public records)

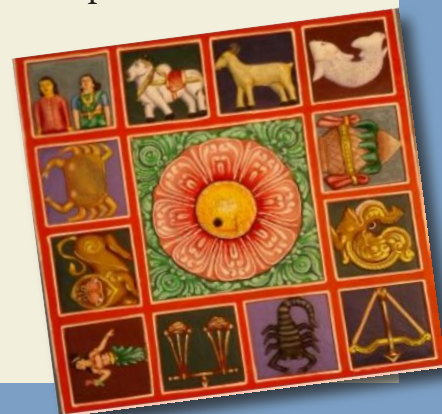
Louise Ivey, astrologist

Louise Ivey (surname shortened from Ivakich) came to the United States with her family from Yugoslavia in 1914 when she was 13-years-old. The family--brother George, sister Caroline, and widowed mother Anna--was Croatian. They settled in Wauwatosa where mother Anna worked at an auto cover plant as a seamstress. The children went to work in their teens—Caroline as a machine operator and later a stenographer, George as a manager of a fruit store, and Louise as a clerk in an auto company. George left school in the 6th grade. Caroline may have remained longer in school, as she advanced from work as a stenographer to a bookkeeper in her early 20s. Louise not only completed high school, but spent a year in college.

By 1930, mother Anna was elderly and retired. Louise gradually took over headship of the family. With both George and Caroline apparently married, Louise purchased a home at 4314 North Grant Boulevard sometime in the 1930s. The home was worth \$6,500—a tidy sum for Great Depression times, when homes could be purchased for less than \$1,000. By 1940, brother George, now widowed or divorce, joined the household with his 18-year-old son Elmer.

And how was Louise able to afford such a home during these challenging times? Not by working as a clerk. She took up the occupation of an astrologer and opened an office at 2903 West North Avenue. All evidence suggests her business did very well.

As an ethnic Croatian, Louise may have had some cultural advantages in her new trade. Excavations conducted at the turn of the 21st century in Croatia have revealed the remains of a 2,000-year-old astrologer's board engraved with signs of the zodiac. This has become the oldest known astrologer's board, suggesting a very long history of astrology among Croats. (*The photo is not of the excavated site.*)



In the second half of the 20th century African Americans began to migrate to the Metcalfe Park area. 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 Metcalfe Park. 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. Many of the factories that operated along North 30th Street fell victim to the trend.

What had been a working-and middle-class area on the north side was in economic decline. Crime increased in the region, which prompted the city, Milwaukee Public Schools, and private partners to target the area for revitalization in the 1990s. After defining Metcalfe Park's boundaries, the City of Milwaukee poured resources into the neighborhood, including street repairs, a police substation, rehabbed housing, and the razing of blighted buildings. In the area near 30th and North Avenue, private and public partners built town house apartments, athletic fields, and the Todd Wehr Metcalfe Community Center. The center, completed in 2001, offered wrap-around services for the entire neighborhood and included a gym, youth recreation and service areas, and an art room programmed by the Roger and Leona Fitzsimonds Boys & Girls Club. In addition, Milwaukee Public Schools opened the Ralph H. Metcalfe School in the center. The school became a state-of-the-art facility with a science lab, technology center, performance/recreational areas, and library/media center.

Current populations (as of 2021)

Today, Metcalfe Park has just under 3,000 residents. The largest ethnic group in the Metcalfe Park neighborhood is African American (over 9 in 10), followed by a scattering of Germans, Mexicans, Irish, indigenous Africans, South Americans, Puerto Ricans, Hmong, American Indians, and people of multiple ancestry in the area.

The median household income in Metcalfe Park is just over \$17,000, placing the neighborhood in the low-income stratum. The largest number of occupations claimed by residents are in the fields of administration, sales, and production. Over two times as many residents are in the healthcare support field than the proportions in other Milwaukee areas. The neighborhood has multiple block clubs.

IMPORTANT NEIGHBORHOOD FEATURES

- **Master Lock**, at 2600 N. 32nd St., a producer of combination locks, padlocks, and safes in the neighborhood since 1939.
- **Todd Wehr Metcalfe Community Center**, at 3400 W. North Ave., (see above).

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.

KWANZAA—BHM			
When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late Dec., see website	Wisconsin Black Historical Center, 2620 W. Center St.	An African-American cultural festival.	Free

FONDY FARMERS MARKET			
When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
May thru Sep., Sat. 9am-12pm	2200 W. Fond du Lac Ave.	Fresh produce from Wisconsin farmers, baked goods, arts, crafts, activities.	Free

FREE FAMILY SWIM			
When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Tue. 6:00-6:55pm females; 7:00-7:55pm males	Washington H.S., 2525 N. Sherman Blvd., enter main gym door on Sherman Blvd.	Indoor swimming with swim caps available for purchase (children 7 and under must be accompanied by adult). 875-6025	Families, free

JULY 4TH CELEBRATION			
When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
July 4th, 9am-12:30pm	Sherman Park, 3000 N. Sherman Blvd.	Parade, Doll Buggy, Bike & Trike, and Coaster judging, games.	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

If you are a resident of Metcalfe Park and have an uplifting comment to make about this neighborhood, send your quote to JFLanthropologist@currently.com

PHOTOS

Todays neighborhood-
Unity Orchard pocket park



Todays neighborhood-
Metcalfe Park



Todays neighborhood-
House on 33rd & Clarke

Todays neighborhood-
Houses on 38th St.



Todays neighborhood-
Forest County Potawatomi
Community Hall



Todays neighborhood-
Master Lock Company



Today's neighborhood-38th Street 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:

JFLanthropologist@currently.com

OLDER PHOTOS FROM RESIDENTS

Local community gardening. Shoots 'n Roots program of the late 1970s, early 1980s. (Photos courtesy of Dennis Lukaszewski of the University Extension.)

