

Approximate boundaries:

N-Mitchell International Airport; **S**-W. College Ave;
E-S. Howell Ave, **W**-S. 3rd St

FAR SOUTH SIDE *New Coeln*

NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION

New Coeln is a sparsely populated neighborhood. The main home architectural style is the 1950s to 1970s ranch house. Most of the neighborhood is occupied by industrial buildings and businesses. The residential section of New Coeln is in the southwest corner of the neighborhood.

New Coeln's topography is flat, interspersed with gently rolling hills. The main green space is Uncas Park, a small commons with an open field, basketball courts, and playground equipment.

HISTORY

New Coeln 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, which include New Coeln. 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

In the 1840s, a group of German immigrants from the area around Cologne (German *Köln*) set up a farming hamlet on Howell near today's College Avenue. They called their hamlet New Coeln. By 1847 the hamlet had about 50 settlers and a new Catholic parish, St. Stephen's. Their inn, variously known as New Coeln House, Deuster's Saloon, and the New Coeln House Dancehall is still open as the Landmark 1850 Inn, and is on the National Register of Historic Places. See photo to the right.

The era of Saveland

The next generation of settlers came at the turn of the 20th century. Many of the far southside 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.

Post World War II

For most far south side neighborhoods, it wasn't until the end of World War Two that the housing market really began to take off. Newly arriving settlers were migrating from Near South Side and

Today's neighborhood—
New Coeln House still standing
on the border of Mitchell Field



Historic South Side neighborhoods and settling alongside German families from past generations. By 1958 there were just over 50 residences in the New Coeln area. Most were Poles and Germans, with a scattering of Italians, Bohemians, Irish, Swedes, and English. See a family profile on the following page.

South Howell Avenue

In 1955 the only businesses in New Coehl were on South Howell Avenue. Below is the short list.

<i>Addresses on S. Howell in New Coeln area in 1955</i>	<i>Names of businesses and organizations from the <u>Milwaukee City Directory</u></i>
5957	Howard's Tap
6039	St. Stephen's Cemetery
6280	Dowodzenka's Service Station
6247	Howell Garden's Tavern
6279	Haase Service Station

Notes:

- See profile of "Howard" of Howard's Tap on the following page.
- The land for this cemetery was donated to the parish of St. Stephen's Catholic Church by Peter Joerres in 1848.
- The Dowodzenka gas station may have been owned by Marian Dowodzenka who lived at 4367 S. Honey Creek Dr.

New Coeln family profile (1950s)

(Photo and other information from public records at Ancestry.com)

The Behlendorfs

In the 1950s, the Marian Rose and Howard Behlendorf family lived at 5937 South Howell Avenue. At the time, they operated Howard's Tap just up the street at 5957 South Howell. They ran the neighborhood tavern for 18 years.

Marian Rose (nee Eckart) was a native of Antigo, Wisconsin. Her parents were both children of Bohemian immigrants. At age 20, Marian moved to Milwaukee where she met and married Howard.

Howard was born and raised in Milwaukee. The parents of Howard and his brother Arnold were Edwin and Rachel F. Behlendorf (nee Lambert). Father Edwin was the son of a German immigrant. Howard's parents divorced when he and his brother were very young. His mother ended up running a rooming house on 11th Street.

The ethnic background of Rachel is unclear. The 1920 census lists her and her two boys as Mulatto, but other censuses list them as white (no other information was found on Rachel).

Howard and Marian Rose had two children. Before opening Howard's Tap in the New Coeln neighborhood, Howard had worked in industry as a foreman.

After 18 years at Howard's Tap, the couple retired and spent their days traveling

throughout the United States in their fifth wheeler. Howard died in 1975. Marian Rose moved to Florida and returned to Wisconsin shortly before her death in 2008. Both were interred at Arlington Park Cemetery in Milwaukee (see below from Ancestry.com).



The population of New Coeln would gradually become more diverse. This happened for two reasons. First, Milwaukee Latinos continued migrating south from the Near South Side in the 1970s and 1980s. Second, the founding of the Islamic Center of Milwaukee in 1982 attracted Muslims from the Middle East and Northern Africa.

Current populations (as of 2021)

Today, small New Coeln has fewer than 800 residents. Just under half are European Americans (most still of German and Polish ancestry). Slightly over 3 in 10 are Latinos (mostly Mexican, but including quite a few Puerto Ricans), and approximately 1 in 6 are Asians (including Hmong/Lao, Filipinos, and Koreans). There are also a scattering of American Indians, African Americans, Arabs, and people of multiple backgrounds.

The median household income in New Coeln is just over \$25,000, placing the neighborhood on the margin between low income and lower middle income strata. The largest number of occupations claimed by residents are in the fields of administration, sales, and production.

Gardening (or as some apparently say—farming) is a major hobby among New Coeln 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 (which includes the western section of New Coeln) 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.	unk

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-8pm, 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

“[I remember] a couple of other playgrounds that people would gather to play basketball at, play baseball at. In one neighborhood we played baseball in the alleys. Baseball was big then and football wasn’t. I think basketball back then was something more to do than to follow professional sports.”

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

“[There are a lot of] children’s activities. There’s the new library with an emphasis on kids. And recent developments that focus on gardening and being green. And then, when the Garden District does an event, kids can do planting. There’s the Halloween parade, Easter egg hunt, hay rides. A lot of volunteers to do them.”

“There’s been some interesting religious practices. One of the micro-farms in the District is Native American. There have been some ceremonies related to that mini-farm in the Garden District, on the UW side, north of Howard, but south of Holt.”

“There’s been a lot of religious sharing. I think it’s legitimate to point out that the amount of interfaith work since 911 has increased a lot because there is a recognition in the District and in the faith communities that there’s a need to develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of each other.”

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-Houses on W. Goldleaf Ave.



Today's neighborhood-Houses on 1st St. & W. Uncas Ave.



Today's neighborhood-Uncas Park

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

¹ Photo attribution: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/d4/New_Coeln_House_Deco9.jpg



www.urban-anthropology.org