

Approximate boundaries:

N-W. Silver Spring Dr; S-W. Capitol Dr;  
E-N. Teutonia Ave; W-N. Sherman Blvd

# NORTHWEST SIDE *Old North Milwaukee*

## NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION

Old North Milwaukee, with a population of over 11,000 residents, covers a large area from Silver Spring Drive on the north to Capitol Drive on the southern border. The neighborhood has a mix of housing styles. The most common is the early 20th century bungalow found mostly in the northern part of the neighborhood. Closer to Capitol Drive are one-story brick houses typical of those built in the mid-20th century.

In the center of Old North Milwaukee is an industrial corridor that extends roughly from 31st to 35th Streets. The neighborhood has considerable green space along parts of Lincoln Creek. See photos below.

## HISTORY

Nearly 50 neighborhoods on Milwaukee's northwest side once comprised the unincorporated Town of Granville 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. Much of the Old North Milwaukee neighborhood was once part of this expanse. While Granville encompassed many hamlets, only North Milwaukee ever incorporated.

But this was not until 1897. Before this, the Town of Granville had its own history.

## 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.



Today's neighborhood-  
Old firehouse and  
village hall building

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.

### *Schwartzburg to Northern Junction to North Milwaukee*

Old North Milwaukee has been known by several names. It started out as the Schwartzburg hamlet within Granville named after an early German settler, Christian Schwartzburg. This hamlet, with its own post office, was centered on Villard and 35th Street. The development of Schwartzburg was spurred by two railroad lines that intersected just west of the hamlet. In turn, the railroads attracted industry in the latter years of the 19th century, including Wisconsin Bridge & Iron Company and Meiselbach Bicycle Company (with one noted employee—William Harley, co-founder of Harley-Davidson). Gradually Schwartzburg became known as Northern Junction, but only until 1897 when hamlet leaders received a charter from the State of Wisconsin and incorporated as North Milwaukee.

### *Germans and more Germans*

Following the factory jobs, Germans who had originally settled on Milwaukee's North Side and in other Granville hamlets began to migrate to North Milwaukee and joined the farmers—most of whom were also Germans. These populations established the churches of North Trinity Lutheran, Holy Redeemer Catholic, and German Full Gospel.

Then in the early years of the 20th century a very different German community arrived. These were the German Russians who had left Germany for Russia in the late 1700s and settled along the Volga River. For about 150 years they had been allowed to keep their own language and traditions. But later Russification policies, and ultimately the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, resulted in collective departure from the area. Many ended up in North Milwaukee (many more settled in the U.S. Plains States).

Between 1910 and 1920 the German Russians set up their own colony where most built farms south of Villard and east of the railroad tracks. They organized Grace Lutheran Church at 34th Street near Villard. The group remained relatively isolated from their neighbors—both through choice and external prejudice. After the 1917 revolution and growing Communist paranoia in America, Milwaukeeans began calling the German Russian colony “Red Town” even though most of the Germans loathed Communism.

### *Movement toward annexation*

With industry, the railroads, and later a streetcar line that connected North Milwaukee to the City of Milwaukee, the town lost its isolated status. When it had incorporated in 1897, the town had two miles between its borders and Milwaukee. But Milwaukee was expanding and more residents chose to live closer to the assets in this suburb. Soon the City of Milwaukee's limits touched North Milwaukee.

Debates arose about whether North Milwaukee should join Milwaukee. Residents who'd migrated from Milwaukee missed some of the services they'd had before and favored annexation, while many of the tenured settlers wished to remain independent. The debates waged on for years, and finally a referendum in 1927 closed the debates in favor of annexation. North Milwaukee officially became part of Milwaukee in 1929. Later the City renamed North Milwaukee “Old North Milwaukee.”

### *The importance of Villard Avenue*

Throughout its history, from the original settlement of Schwartzburg to the German Russian colony to the arrival of newcomers seeking industrial jobs, Villard Avenue had been central to Old North Milwaukee's development. It was one of its main arteries and, with North 35th Street, a main commercial corridor.

The following list shows the businesses and offices that were on Villard between West 32nd Street and Sherman Boulevard shortly after the annexation--at the height of the Great Depression. See summary points below.

<i>Addresses on W. Villard in 1933</i>	<i>Businesses, offices, and organizations from Milwaukee City Directory</i>
3200	Lakeside Bridge & Steel Company
3227	North Milwaukee Library
3304	Hackbarth Brothers Autos
3326	Masonic Hall Myron Reed Lodge No. 297 F&AM
3328-32	Post Office Station F
3329	William Barnett Machine Shop
3400	Oscar G. Storck Hardware
3406	Federal Transport Service
3418	North Milwaukee State Bank
3421	Max W. Fischer Tinner
3422	Ernest A. Radmann Barber
3423	Charles H. Jahn Physician
3426	George D. Greiner Dentist
3428	Breiner & Cohen Inc. Real Estate Acme Building & Loan Association
3430	Standard Oil Company Filling Station
3433	Gustave Driebel Tavern
3500	Rainbow Tavern (Joseph P. Sell)
3501	Sherman's Pharmacy
3502	Edward H. Madden Barber
3504	Emmet A. Welch Dentist
3505	A & P Tea Company Grocer

<i>Addresses on W. Villard in 1933</i>	<i>Businesses, offices, and organizations from Milwaukee City Directory</i>
3506	National Tea Company Grocer
3507	Morris Lieberman Lawyer, Norbert J. Wegmann Physician, Joseph D. Byron Dentist, M.G. Ellinger Osteopath
3510	Albert C. Mueller Shoes
3511	Walter L. Fischer Meats
3512	Charles W. Gothke Grocer
3513	George J. Gumerman Physician
3515	Josef Krippel Tavern
3516	Badger Paint & Hardware Stores Inc.
3517-19	Josef Joseph Dry Goods
3520	Waino H. Johnson Barber
3522	Raymond J. Krause Dentist
3523	Lawrence P. Flavin Confectionary
3524	Hubert Lepton Tailor
3527	Oscar M. Rafeld Malt & Hops
3528	Leonard H. Plautz Jeweler
3532	Engelman's Rexall Drug Store
3535	Globe Tavern
3541	Isaac Sader Restaurant
3601	Joseph Erdman Confectionary
3602	Citizen's Bank of Milwaukee
3603	William Mathiesen Shoe Repair
3605	Walter B. Mueller Hardware
3606	William Poehlman Confectionary
3608	George J. Pugh Physician
3610	Ritz Theater
3611	Fred W. Schlapman Bowling
3614	Badger General Store
3615	Keller Brothers Inc. Grocer & Meats

<i>Addresses on W. Villard in 1933</i>	<i>Businesses, offices, and organizations from Milwaukee City Directory</i>
3616	Leslie Wiskow Shoe Repair
3618-20	Pittelman's Food Market
3621	August M. Abe Undertaker
3622	Lady Lee Delicatessen
3638	Henry N. Wilbert Baker
3632	Albert Eske Filling Station
3633	Ernest Dieterle Tavern
3701	Roettgens Fuel & Supply
3702	North Presbyterian Church
3726	Reverend Walter A. Geske
3727	Hilbert Furniture
	Apartment buildings
3820	Rilling –Englich Company Furniture Manufacturers
3841	Bend Trackage Service
	Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific Railroad Crossing
3904	Viking Oil Company Service Station
3910	William G. Slugg Feed & Grain
	Apartment buildings

**Summary notes from the U.S. Census and other records:**

- All the trappings of a self-sufficient little city were on this street, including factories, financial institutions, grocers, butchers, confectioners, barbers, bakers, restaurants, gas stations, taverns, hardware stores, and even a *bowling alley and a theater*.
- The shopkeepers were overwhelmingly German, and nearly all were immigrants or children of immigrants. Like most Milwaukee neighborhoods prior to about 1970, few shopkeepers had high school educations.
- Lakeside Bridge & Steel opened in 1924. Wisconsin Bridge & Iron was just up the street on 35th, just off of Villard.
- Oscar G. Storck, with the hardware store, was not a native to North Milwaukee. A son of German immigrants, he'd been raised on Milwaukee's near north side.
- Max W. Fischer, the tinsmith, was born in Germany. He and his wife retired in Granville by 1940 just up the street. He completed the 6th grade.

- Ernest Radmann, the barber, lived at his shop. He'd completed the 4th grade and when he reached retirement age, he moved to Wauwatosa and worked as a night watchman.
- Albert Mueller, with the shoe store, was one of the few shopkeepers who actually finished two years of high school. Of German extraction, he, his wife, and children lived at the same address as the shop.
- Charles Gothke, the grocer, was born in Michigan, the son of German immigrants. He had begun his career as a piano finisher in North Milwaukee.
- Joseph Krippel, with the tavern, was a German born in Yugoslavia.
- Lawrence P. Flavin, the confectioner, was a rare non-German shopkeeper on Villard. He was the son of an Irish immigrant. He and his family lived at the same address as his shop.
- Leonard Plautz, the jeweler, lived next door to his store. He was the son of German immigrants. He was raised in Chase, Oconto County, Wisconsin.
- Isaac Sader, with the restaurant, was one of the German Russians. His parents were German speakers from Russia. They had settled briefly in Kansas before coming to North Milwaukee. Three years earlier, in 1930, Isaac was renting a room on 35th Street and working at the lunchroom as a waiter.
- The Ritz Theatre was opened in 1926 and was later known as the Villa Theatre. It closed in 1986. There was a failed attempt to reopen it in the early 1990s but it failed to attract a wide audience.
- Leslie Wiskow, the shoe repairman, was only 20 when he set up shop. He was living just around the corner with his parents at the time.
- Fred W. Schlapman, with the bowling alley, had listed his birthplace and that of his parents as Granville. His grandparents were German immigrants. He was among the most educated shopkeepers on Villard, having completed one year of college.
- August Abe, the undertaker, was a German immigrant from Mecklenburg. He had completed 8th grade and was living at the same address as his funeral parlor.
- Albert Eske, with the gas station, was a German immigrant from Pomerania.
- Ernest Dieterle, with the tavern, was also a German immigrant. He'd worked as a planer before opening his bar (which had been permitted as a "soft drink" place in 1930 during Prohibition).
- William Slugg, with the grain and feed store, was raised in Pennsylvania. The presence of this store on Villard indicates that farmers still lived nearby. Many were likely the German Russians that had arrived between 1910 and 1920.

By the 1940s, the City of Milwaukee completely surrounded the Old North Milwaukee area. African Americans began to migrate in for two reasons: (1) available industrial jobs in the area, and (2) the need for housing following the leveling of their former central city home known as Bronzeville (see [Halyard Park neighborhood](#) for details). One of the earliest black families to make Old North Milwaukee their home was the Halyards.



## Spotlight on Old North Milwaukee family (mid-20th century)

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

### The Halyards

When the Halyards first moved to Milwaukee, they settled in on North 9th Street just outside of the Halyard Park neighborhood, which today bears their name. By 1940, Wilber and Ardie Halyard (see right<sup>1</sup>) lived at 4326 North 37th Street in the Old North Milwaukee neighborhood. Like many former residents of Bronzeville, the Halyards were groundbreakers. Together the couple founded the first African American-owned savings and loan association in the State of Wisconsin. The pair opened Columbia Savings & Loan with a \$10 bill in 1924, just one year after they arrived in Milwaukee. The institution helped black families secure home loans—a radical change from the policies of mainstream banks that usually denied loans on the basis of race.

Both Wilber and Ardie came from humble beginnings. Born in South Carolina in 1895, Wilber completed high school and moved north with the Great Migration, taking a caretaker's job in Beloit in 1920. Ardie (nee Clark), born 1896 in Covington Georgia, was the daughter of sharecroppers. She had graduated from Atlanta University, moved north, and married Wilber in Wisconsin.

While the two were running Columbia Savings & Loan, Ardie worked as a social worker for Goodwill Industries during the days and donated her time at the S&L at night. In 1951, Halyard became the first woman president of the Milwaukee chapter of the NAACP. In the 1960s, she worked with Father James Groppi to establish the NAACP Youth Council, a group responsible for most of the fair housing marches in 1967. Ardie Halyard also served on the Wisconsin State Board of Vocational, Technical, and Adult Education for more than eight years.

Columbia Savings & Loan is still in operation today.



### *Post 1940s*

In 1970, African Americans comprised 1 percent of the neighborhood's population. By 1985 this rose to 40 percent—just about the same percent as the older German population. As in most Milwaukee neighborhoods where Germans dominated, the integration was peaceful.

However, just as soon as the black population had settled in large numbers, they were faced with deindustrialization. Wisconsin Bridge & Iron Company closed its doors in 1983. Other Old North Milwaukee industries followed. What had been a working- and middle-class neighborhood was in decline.

## Current populations (as of 2021)

Most of the Germans have left Old North Milwaukee. Today, nearly 9 in 10 residents of the neighborhood are African Americans. The rest are mainly European Americans, with just over 500 claiming German ancestry. It is a neighborhood that skews young with over one-third of the residents under the age of 20. Females also significantly outnumber men.

Approximately half of the residents live in low-income households (with annual household incomes under \$25,000). The largest number of occupations in Old North Milwaukee are in the fields of administration, production, and healthcare support. Over 6 in 10 property units are likely to be rented, and the rents are reasonable with about three-quarters going for \$500 to \$1,500 for the largest apartments.

While the neighborhood is not affluent, it has a plethora of service organizations, including nonprofits and religious institutions. The Northwest Side Community Development Corporation provides various services and business loans to area stakeholders. In 2011 the CDC partnered with the Milwaukee Public Library to build Villard Square, a mixed-use project on 35th and Villard. The three floors above the Villard branch of the library house grandparents who are raising their grandchildren.

The Milwaukee Islamic Da'wah Center on Teutonia with a congregation of mainly African American Muslims, offers spiritual and Arabic classes to members, and a food pantry, soup kitchen, and other services to all.

## INTERESTING FEATURES

- **Milwaukee Public Library**, Villard Square Branch at 5190 N. 35th St.
- **Banner Prep School**, at 3718 W. Lancaster Ave., with individualized student learning plans to help prepare high schoolers for college.
- **Milwaukee Islamic Da'wah Center**, at 5135 N. Teutonia, serving the mainly African American Muslim community.
- **DRS Technologies Inc.**, at 4265 N. 30th St., manufacturing military equipment and a good neighborhood source of family-supporting jobs.

## 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.

### JULY 4TH CELEBRATION—LINCOLN PARK

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
July 4th, dusk	Lincoln Park, 1301 W. Hampton Ave.	Fireworks at dusk.	Free

### NATIONAL NIGHT OUT—NORTH SIDE

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
First week Aug., weekday 4-8pm	Lincoln Park, 1301 W. Hampton Ave.	Fun evening of free food, games, rides, chance to dialogue with local police and community organizations,	Free



## FREE FAMILY SWIM—WASHINGTON HS

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Tue.'s 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	Free

## JULY 4TH CELEBRATION--SHERMAN

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>

## QUOTE FROM RESIDENTS

If you are a resident in Old North Milwaukee and wish to make an uplifting observation about this neighborhood, please send your quote to [JFLanthropologist@currently.com](mailto:JFLanthropologist@currently.com)

## PHOTOS



Today's neighborhood-Lincoln Creek looking west from Teutonia



Today's neighborhood-  
Milwaukee Islamic Da'wah Center



Today's neighborhood-  
Old firehouse and village hall buildings  
on 35th St. south of Villard



Today's neighborhood-  
Lincoln Creek looking west from Courtland



Today's neighborhood-  
Spirit of Christ Deliverance Church  
at 42nd and Hope Ave.



Today's neighborhood-Villard Square



Today's neighborhood-  
Looking north east from Congress St.





Today's neighborhood-  
Houses on 42nd & Hope Ave.



Today's neighborhood-  
Houses on 31st & Courtland

<sup>i</sup> Photo attribution: [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/e7/Ardie\\_Clark\\_Halyard\\_\(13269906955\).jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/e7/Ardie_Clark_Halyard_(13269906955).jpg)

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](mailto:JFLanthropologist@currently.com)