

Approximate boundaries:

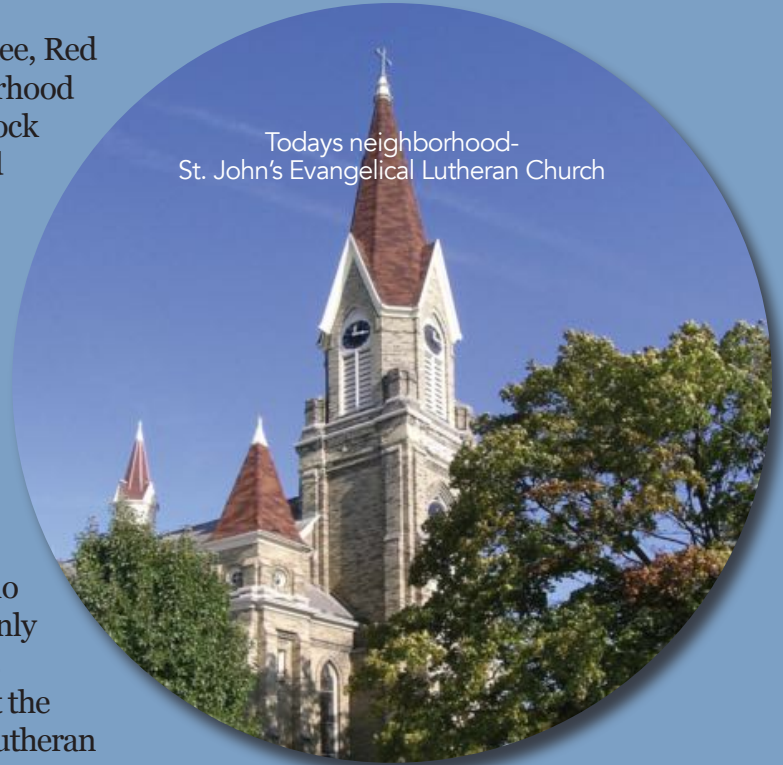
N-W. Howard Ave; **S**-W. Waterford Ave;
E-S. 68th St, **W**-S. 76th St

SOUTHWEST SIDE *Red Oak Heights*

NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION

Located on the southern boundary of Milwaukee, Red Oak Heights is a primarily residential neighborhood with moderate population density. Housing stock is mainly mid-20th century ranch interspersed with a few bungalows, Colonials, and Cape Cods from the 1920s and 1930s. The main business district is along South 76th Street on the neighborhood's western border.

The topography of Red Oaks Heights is mainly flat to gently rolling hills. The majority of the streets follow a rectangular grid except for West Van Beck Avenue that curves at the eastern end and turns into South 70th Street. The three east/west streets off of South 70th Street end in *culs de sac*. There is no public green space in the neighborhood. The only open green spaces are associated with St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church--on its grounds, at the cemetery, and on the playground of St. John's Lutheran School to the north of the church. See photos below.



Today's neighborhood-
St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church

HISTORY

The Red Oak Heights neighborhood was once a part of the unincorporated Town of Greenfield which extended from today's 27th to 124th Streets and Greenfield to College Avenues.

Early populations

A hamlet named Root Creek was established in the mid-1800s with a post office near the junction of today's 68th Street and Forest Home Avenue—then the Janesville Plank Road. The post office would later be moved to South 76th Street and then again to the intersection of Howard and Forest Home Avenues, next to Honey Creek (just east of the Red Oak Heights neighborhood). In 1887 the population of the service area of the post office was estimated at 129—most of the residents being German with a few Irish farmers. While Germans dominated the hamlet population, they hailed from different regions. Some German immigrants had come from Austria, while others were from the German areas of Mecklenburg, Saxony, and Brandenburg. The Root Creek hamlet extended west from the current Root Creek and Red Oak Heights neighborhoods to other Milwaukee areas and south into today's City of Greenfield. The post office discontinued in 1908, but an active group of Root Creek farmers and gardeners organized the Root Creek Fair in 1914--an event that remained in operation through 1939.

During the 1920s, the entire Southwest Side of Milwaukee began to transition from a farming district to clusters of settlements that would become Milwaukee neighborhoods. Most of the migrating populations were Polish and German. Many settled first in the Jackson Park neighborhood, but some turned west and ventured further into the countryside, creating a

minor housing boom. By the mid-1950s the Red Oak Heights area had fewer than 15 residences and no business corridor. By 1971, the neighborhood had just over 100 residences. While the largest ethnic groups of residents remained Polish and German, the neighborhood also drew in Bohemians, Austrians, Latvians, English, Irish, Swiss, and Hungarians.

A good example of residents drawn to the area during this period appears below in the family feature.

Red Oak Heights family (1960s)

*Name selected from the City Directory in the Red Oak Heights area
(photos and additional information are from U.S. Census and other public records)*

The Bieris

Sometime prior to 1970, the Bieris moved into a home at 3958 South 74th Street in the Red Oak Heights neighborhood. Born in 1916 in Michigan, Fred (Frederick) J. Bieri Jr. and his family moved to West Allis, Wisconsin while Fred Jr. was a toddler. His parents were Fred (Frederick) Sr. and Helena Bertha Bieri (nee Fischer). Fred Sr. had been born in Switzerland. The family spoke German at home.

Fred Jr.'s wife, Leola Bertha Bieri (nee Page) was from Shawano County, Wisconsin. She grew up on Page Road where her father, Frank Page, owned a dairy farm. Her mother was Emma Page. Both of her parents were children of German immigrants.

Fred Jr.'s father died sometime before 1940. He and two of his siblings moved into the home of his grandmother, Louise Fischer, in Milwaukee's Polonia neighborhood. From there, Fred Jr. attended Bay View High School. *See his photo (right) from the school's 1933 yearbook.* When he graduated from high school, he took up work in the auto industry, where he began as a clerk.

It is not known when Fred Jr. married Leola Page, or if they had children. But Fred Jr. did serve time in the United States Army during World War II. He enlisted on May 19, 1945 and served until September 30 of the same year.

The Bieris did not live out their lives in Red Oak Heights. Sometime prior to Fred Jr.'s death in 2007, the family moved to Florida. When Fred died, he was buried at Charlotte Memorial Gardens in Charlotte County, Florida. Leola joined him in death in 2012 and was also buried at Charlotte Memorial Gardens.



South 76th Street

A business corridor was developing on South 76th Street during the 1960s. Below is a list of businesses and apartments within the Red Oak Heights borders in 1971. See summary and notes that follow.

<i>Addresses on S. 76th St. in 1971</i>	<i>Names of businesses and apartment buildings from Milwaukee City Directory</i>
3908	Dean's Hometown Service Station
3913	Woodlawn Court Apartments
3915	Woodlawn Court Apartments
3917	Woodlawn Court Apartments
3919	Woodlawn Court Apartments
3928	Boy Blue Ice Cream Stores
3939	Sentry Food Stores
3943	Gull Pharmacy
3945	Frenchy's Poodle and Grooming Salon
3947	Russell Nooyen Osteopathic Physician
3949	Adelman Laundry and Dry Cleaners
3955	Woodlawn Court Apartments
3957	Woodlawn Court Apartments
3959	Woodlawn Court Apartments
3961	Woodlawn Court Apartments
3963	Woodlawn Court Apartments
3965	Woodlawn Court Apartments
3967	Woodlawn Court Apartments
3969	Woodlawn Court Apartments
3971	Woodlawn Court Apartments
3973	Woodlawn Court Apartments
3975	Woodlawn Court Apartments
3977	Woodlawn Court Apartments
3979	Woodlawn Court Apartments
4001	Apartments
4003	Apartments
4005	Woodlawn Court Apartments

Summary and notes from census and other records:

- Technically, only those addresses on the west side of the street were within Red Oak Heights, but residents in this very small neighborhood would have no trouble accessing businesses on both sides of the street.
- The neighborhood was well served with a supermarket, drug store, gas station, cleaner, and a myriad of housing possibilities.
- The ubiquitous Woodlawn Court Apartments would eventually change its name to Woodland Court that matched the name of the neighborhood.
- There still is a Boy Blue Ice Cream shop in the Greater Milwaukee area at 82nd and Lincoln.
- Adelman Laundry was a family-run business with multiple locations in Milwaukee (at least 40). The president of the business during these years was Albert "Ollie" Adelman. He was a great baseball fan. When the New York Yankees came to Milwaukee for the 1958 World Series, Adelman took out an ad, telling the visiting team members: "We will do the laundry and dry cleaning for you and your family during your stay in Milwaukee, without charge. As long as you are going to be taken to the cleaners, you may as well be taken by the very best." Unfortunately, the Braves lost the Series.

Arrival of Latinos

Latinos (mainly Mexicans) began to settle on the *near* South Side in the 1920s and slowly migrated south into the Polish areas. Since the 1970s, the Mexican community has grown all over the South and Southwest Side, including Red Oak Heights.

A number of push-pull factors influenced the population changes. During the early 1900s Mexican immigration to the United States expanded because of worsening economic conditions in Mexico. A large wave of Mexicans also left the country during the political and economic turmoil created by the Mexican Revolution of 1910. In addition, both Mexicans and Puerto Ricans were often recruited by local industries to fill workplace needs. Beginning in 1917, the US government implemented a series of immigration restriction policies to curb the influx of Mexicans, mainly in response to local claims that Mexicans (who often worked for low wages) were taking jobs away from 'true' Americans.

But they found a place to fit in. Latinos—particularly Mexicans--were able to settle successfully alongside Poles in particular because they shared so many traits in common. These included the Catholic faith, the focus on the Madonna figure, polka music traditions, similarities in childrearing and eldercare practices, and an entrepreneurial spirit.

Current populations (as of 2021)

Today, the small Red Oak Heights neighborhood has just over 500 residents. Of these, nearly 8 in 10 are European Americans (over half claiming German or Polish ancestry). In addition, approximately 1 in 15 residents are Asian Americans (mostly of Indian and Pakistani descent) and 1 in 20 are Latinos (mostly of Mexican descent, but with a considerable number from Puerto Rico). The remaining population is comprised of a scattering of people of multiple racial backgrounds.

Red Oak Heights is the eighth wealthiest neighborhood in Milwaukee, with a median household income of just over \$66,000 annually. Just over 35 percent of the adult residents hold bachelor's or graduate degrees, which is high for Milwaukee. The occupations cited most often by residents are in the fields of administration, production, education, and management. It also has significantly more residents employed in local government than other city areas.

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.

DAN JANSEN FAMILY FEST--GREENFIELD

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late May, Fri. 5-11pm, Sat. 12-11pm, Sun. 12-4pm	Konkel Park, 5151 W. Layton Ave., Greenfield	Festival of rides, car show, live entertainment, and more.	Free

ST. MARY PARISH FESTIVAL—HALES CORNERS

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Early Jul., Fri., Sat., Sun., see website for hours	9520 W. Forest Home Ave., Hales Corners	Festival to bring parishioners together in a spirit of community, including food, games, concessions, live music, raffle and more.	Free

CROATIANFEST--FRANKLIN

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Mid Jul., Sat. 11am-11pm; Sun. 11am-6pm	Croatian Park, 9100 S. 76th St., Franklin	Festival with Croatian food, live music, kids' activities, games, and more.	unk

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST FAMILY FESTIVAL--GREENFIELD

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late Jul., Fri. 5-11pm, Sat. 3-11pm, Sun. 12-9pm	8500 W. Cold Spring Road, Greenfield	Festival including rides, games, wine cellar, bingo, food, music, and more.	Free

NATIONAL NIGHT OUT--GREENFIELD

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
First week Aug., weekday 5:30- 8:30pm	Konkel Park, 5151 W. Layton Ave., Greenfield	Fun evening of free food, games, rides, chance to dialogue with local police and community organizations.	Free

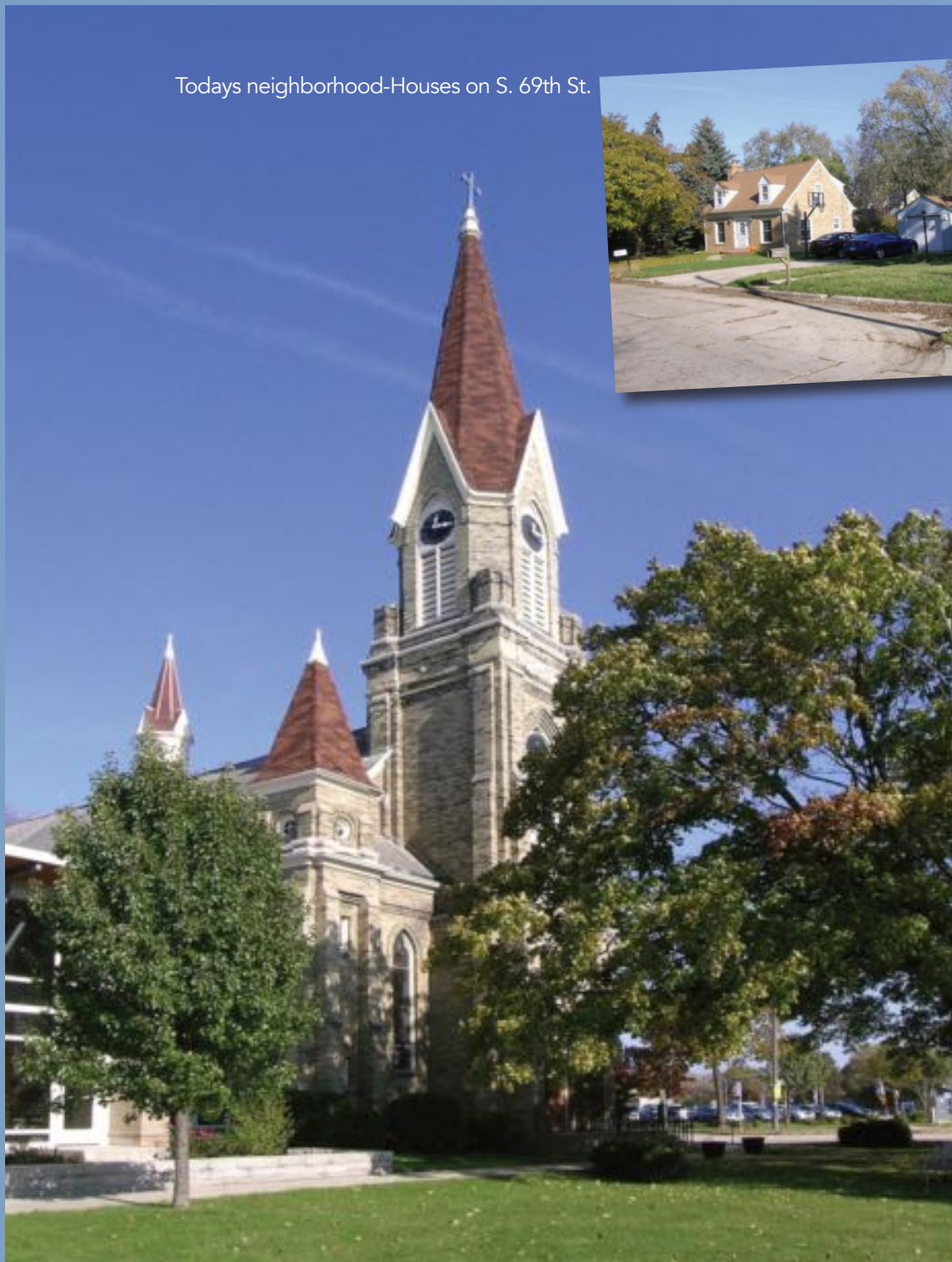
Most of these outings are provided courtesy of MECAH Publishing. To access the book that provides nearly 600 outings—all priced under \$10—for the entire Greater Milwaukee area, go to <http://mecahmilwaukee.com/NonFiction.html>

QUOTES FROM RESIDENTS

If you are a resident of this neighborhood and wish to make an interesting observation about it, please send your quote to JFLanthropologist@currently.com

PHOTOS

Today's neighborhood-Houses on S. 69th St.



Today's neighborhood-St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church

Todays neighborhood-Houses on S. 74th St. & W. Waterford Ave.



Todays neighborhood-
St. John's Evangelical Lutheran
Church Cemetery



Todays neighborhood-S. 76th St. looking north



Today's neighborhood-Houses on S. 72nd St. & W. Van Beck Ave.

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



www.urban-anthropology.org