

Approximate boundaries:
N-Railroad tracks; S-W. Villard Ave;
E-N. 60th St; W-W-Fond du Lac Fwy

NORTHWEST SIDE *Silver Spring*

NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION

The Silver Spring neighborhood has a high population density. Housing stock includes a mix of early to mid-20th century architectural styles. The residential area is dominated by ranch homes and multi-unit apartment buildings, but there is also a scattering of Tudors, Cape Cods, and bungalows throughout the neighborhood. A large part of the north end of the neighborhood is occupied by industrial and other commercial businesses. The main commercial corridor is along West Silver Spring Drive.

Silver Spring's topography is gently rolling to moderately steep hills throughout the area. Streets in the central section follow a rectangular

grid pattern but quite a few of the streets south of Silver Spring Drive are curving. There are two public green spaces in the Silver Spring neighborhood. One is Carmen Playfield, an MPS property; the other is Westlawn Playground in the southeastern corner of the neighborhood. Lincoln Creek also winds through the southeastern corner of the neighborhood just south of West Custer Avenue. See area photos below.



HISTORY

Over 50 neighborhoods on Milwaukee's northwest side once comprised the unincorporated 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 Silver Spring was once part of the Township. It was named after its main street, Silver Spring.

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).

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, ranging 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.

Englesburg

Granville Township was divided into smaller units—mostly unincorporated hamlets. Much of the area that is today the Silver Spring, Valhalla, and Silverswan neighborhoods had been called Englesburg, named after German settler F. W. Engles. Englesburg centered around today's 91st Street, Highway 175, and Villard. The unincorporated town was populated by German Catholics who established St. Martin's Catholic Church as their anchor. Englesburg became known for its early auto races on a four-mile stretch of road—races that became famous for cars that reached speeds of 20 miles per hour!

Movement toward annexation

Economic prosperity reigned in Granville, due partially to the work ethic of these early German farmers. The town 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. Resident William Schlapmann owned a creamery that produced 100 pounds a day. Gradually industries began to open in Granville and the area eventually became the most concentrated base of industrial employment in Wisconsin.

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.

At the time of annexation, the Silver Spring neighborhood added public housing. The Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee (HACM) had been established in 1944. The Works Progress Administration constructed Milwaukee's first project—Parklawn. Throughout the 1940s, the HACM built Northlawn, Southlawn, and Berryland—mainly to accommodate the returning World War II veterans and their families. In the 1950s and 1960s, the HACM expanded by constructing new developments. These included Hillside Terrace, Lapham Park, and Westlawn—the latter being in the Silver Spring neighborhood.

Neighborhood businesses

Silver Spring Drive has always been the neighborhood's main commercial corridor. See a profile of one merchant family below.

Silver Spring merchant family (mid-20th century)

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

The Chopps

Sometime after 1940, Roy Chopp opened a bar at 6432 W. Silver Spring Drive, in today's Silver Spring neighborhood. He and his family lived approximately a block west of the tavern.

Roy Chopp (born 1901) was the son of Croatian immigrants, Joseph and Emilie Chopp. His parents had come to the United States as small children. The family briefly settled in Michigan before moving to Milwaukee's Walker's Point neighborhood on South 11th Street. Roy's father Joseph opened a grocery store in the neighborhood and his mother also worked in the store. They apparently prospered as merchants because the couple sent at least two of their five children to college. Roy completed college and attended grad school. While in college he helped out by working as a clerical assistant for the railroad.

Roy married Roselyne Ehlhardt, the granddaughter of German immigrants. Roselyne was raised in Greenfield with her siblings and parents, William and Mary Ehlhardt. Her father worked as an electrician for the telephone company.

Roy did not immediately open his tavern. During the Great Depression, Roy and Roselyne moved to West Allis where Roy worked as a store keeper for the Public Assistance Department of the government. The couple had three children, daughters Elizabeth and Beatrice (probably twins) and son Lloyd. Unfortunately, while Lloyd was just a toddler, Roselyne died, cause unknown.

Roy remarried a young woman named Ellanena, who helped him raise his three children. The family moved to the Silver Spring neighborhood when the area was still within Granville Township. There he opened his tavern.

The following is a sample of some of the businesses that were neighbors to the Chopp tavern and were incorporated into Milwaukee following annexation.

<i>Address on W. Silver Spring</i>	<i>Name of business from the <u>Milwaukee City Directory</u> in 1966</i>
6000	Ben Franklin Stores
6012	Big Spring Launderette
6018	Eastmann's Beer & Liquor Mart
6020	Lucia Beaute Salon
6022	Sherry Optical

<i>Address on W. Silver Spring</i>	<i>Name of business from the Milwaukee City Directory in 1966</i>
6024	Kieffer's Barber Shop
6028	Ace Cleaners & Launderers
6036	National Food Stores, Inc.
6120	Zahn's Standard Service Station
6204	McNall's Texaco
6220	Hal's Beer & Liquor
6234	First Federal Savings & Loan
6236	Polly Prim Laundry & Dry Cleaning
6244	Trasser's Hair Dressing Salon
6330	Don's Pure Oil Service Station
6350	Kohl's Food Store Drug Fair Inc.
6410	Larry's Enco Service Station
6420	Dutchland Dairy Store
6432	Chopp's Bar
7001	Apartments
7009	Apartments
7015	Apartments
7023	Apartments
7025	Apartments
7029	Apartments
7035	Apartments
7101	Apartments
7109	Apartments

<i>Address on W. Silver Spring</i>	<i>Name of business from the <u>Milwaukee City Directory</u> in 1966</i>
7115	Apartments
7123	Apartments
7129	Apartments
7131	Apartments
7135	Apartments
7201	Apartments
7209	Apartments
7217	Apartments
7223	Apartments
7229	Apartments
7235	Apartments
7239	Apartments
7301	Apartments
7308	Apartments
7333	St. Mark's United Church of Christ
7400	Seven Four Hundred Club Tavern

Summary notes from the U.S. Census and other public sources

- While apartment buildings dominated this stretch of Silver Spring, the neighborhood really did have all its needs met, with two supermarkets, a variety store, three gas stations, a drug store, three cleaners, a clothing store, and a barber.
- Ben Franklin Stores is now a Family Dollar Store.
- First Federal Savings & Loan is now a laundromat.
- The Kohl's market is now Silver Spring Food Town.
- Chopps Bar is now International Electronics Service Company.
- St. Mark's United Church of Christ is now the Silver Spring Church of God.

Late 20th century developments

In the second half of the 20th century African Americans began to migrate to the neighborhood. 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.

Current populations (as of 2021)

There are over 13,000 residents in this densely packed neighborhood, making it one of the most populated areas in Milwaukee. Today, just over two-thirds of the residents are African Americans. Approximately 1 in 6 are Asians (nearly all of Hmong/Lao descent) and 1 in 9 are European Americans (most of mixed European ancestry). There is also a scattering of Latinos (nearly all of Mexican descent, but also Caribbeans and Central Americans), indigenous Africans, American Indians, and people of multiple racial backgrounds in the area. Silver Spring also has significantly more women than men in its population—particularly young, single females.

The median household income for Silver Spring is just over \$30,000, which places the population in the lower middle-income stratum. Residents over 25 are most often employed in administrative work, production, and sales.

The Silver Spring neighborhood has a relatively high rate of home ownership. Of the available property units, 59 percent are owned.

INTERESTING FEATURES

- **Westlawn Gardens/housing development** at 6331 W. Silver Spring Dr., constructed as a public housing project in the 1950s, rebuilt in part in 2013, and further rebuilt beginning in 2017.
- **Silver Spring Neighborhood Center** at 5460 N. 64th St., a community center serving the Westlawn Housing Development since the late 1950s.

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.

SLEDDING--MCGOVERN			
When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Winter, daytime	McGovern Park, 5400 N. 51st St.	Sledding hills for family and friends.	Free

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

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.ⁱ—About THEN.

“I think this was one of the first neighborhoods on the northwest side that got integrated. I lived on 73rd and Silver Spring in the 1960s. We lived in an apartment building and there was a black family living in the front unit. That was the first time I'd ever seen an integrated apartment

building. And there was Westlawn right down the street. I think about half of the tenants were African American then. It seems like things were working out. But I did know of some white home owners who moved because of it. But I always say—if they don't want diversity, good riddance. You don't want that type in your neighborhood.”

“I lived there in when I was in my early 20s with a roommate. Neither of us drove and we could always walk just a short distance to get anything we wanted—food, make-up, beer, whatever. We walked to the laundromat too. You don't have anything like that today.”

“I lived there [Silver Spring neighborhood] about the time that the annexation was going on. What always stands out is a certain woman I'll call Lady M. Everyone in the neighborhood knew her. She was infamous. If she wasn't after somebody's husband, she was trying to bilk you out of something. My first contact with her came at my office. She'd been hired as a receptionist. She didn't do much. She went to our boss, who wasn't on top of things, and complained that the bookkeeper had not given her a payroll check for weeks. He just wrote out a check for her without talking to the bookkeeper. This went on for about a month and it was finally discovered that she'd been double-dipping all the time. So I told my cousin, who also lived in the neighborhood, about this woman, Turns out she had done the same thing at her workplace, plus had stolen tons of goods.

“So then, one day I am walking outside my door and I see people moving in across the street. It's Lady M, her boyfriend, and some other woman. One of the neighbors tells me that the boyfriend was actually married to the other woman, but this Lady M had somehow snatched him right out from under her and Lady M had even talked the wife into her moving in with them when she'd gotten evicted from her apartment. This neighbor also told me that Lady M had once borrowed this really expensive human hair wig from her. She returned it a week later, but it wasn't the same wig. It was some cheap little synthetic thing that M tried to pass off as the neighbor's wig. She said she'd just had it styled.

“Another neighbor told me that she'd had Lady M in her house and she was kind of looking around. The next month she went to cash a check at the Kohl's down the street and they refused it. They said they'd had a check returned. Then she found that one book of her checks was missing and she figured it was probably that time that Lady M came in.”

“There was some kind of an early super store around Florist—toward the west end of the [Silver Spring] neighborhood [mid-1960s]. It was a super market and also had clothes and hardware and just about everything. It seemed like a precursor to the Moorway store, that I think came later, but not here. I just can't recall the name. I remember liking to shop there, because I could always stop at this little grill that was inside the store and have some kind of a treat. But it didn't last—not sure why.”

“I remember Chopp's Bar. I had this friend who lived down the street [Silver Spring neighborhood]. Her husband was out of work and she wasn't, so he had the job of making supper. But instead he'd go hang out at Chopp's and when suppertime came, he would go next door to Dutchland Dairy and get a bucket of chicken or fish or something and take it home and stick it in the oven and pretend like he'd slaved over the stove all day.”

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

“The neighborhood has changed on the condo complex where I live. We are owner occupied. We now have subsidized housing. We are a very multicultural area, which we were not to begin with.”

“I think they got along well. I think there was a bond mainly because they were trying to maintain the value of your home. And what’s changed is, and I have alluded to it before, is that now that the townhouses are now owned by absentee landlords, I definitely have not seen properties kept up. I’ve seen that some cases, people that I am not real fond of in terms of what activity I see there is a lot of transit that you don’t see in the townhouses. You don’t see a lot of stability.”

“One of the things that we liked about this place was that we liked the idea that our children would be growing up in a more integrated neighborhood. As our kids were growing up, it was great. They had friends of both races, lots of friends in the neighborhood. [There were] a lot of kids in the neighborhood because people were building the houses. There were a lot of families like us that were building their houses and just starting up. To the north of us it was all park, but it used to be all these woods and open field and our kids would go play in the woods and catch frogs and go ride their bikes in the open field. Our kids had a great childhood here.” cars but that’s calmed down quite a bit.”

¹ 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 N. 80th St.
& W. Thurston Ave. looking south

Today's neighborhood-
Apartment houses on N. 63rd St.
& W. Kaul Ave.



Today's neighborhood-
Houses on N. 80th St. & W.
Thurston Ave.



Today's neighborhood-
MPS playfield
on N. 74th St. & W. Carmen Ave.



Today's neighborhood-Industrial buildings on N. 80th St. & W. Florist Ave.

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:

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