

Approximate boundaries:
N-W. Burleigh St; S-W. Center St;
E-N. 43rd St; W-N. 60th St

NORTHWEST SIDE *St. Joseph's*

NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION

Many of the homes in the St. Joseph's neighborhood are striking. The large bungalows, duplexes, and Period Revival homes are finely crafted from brick, wood, and stone. English and Mediterranean architectural styles prevail. There are many religious institutions in St. Joseph. The neighborhood has nearly 200 times the number of religious organizations per square mile than Wisconsin generally.

Burleigh Street is the major business corridor. See neighborhood photos below.

HISTORY

St. Joseph's neighborhood is one of six that comprise the larger area traditionally understood as the Sherman Park neighborhood. Residents began to settle Sherman Park in the late teens and early twenties of the 20th century. Many were attracted to the suburban look of the area that at this time was the edge of the city. Developers had created wide, tree-lined streets and boulevards, but the beautiful homes were the neighborhood's signature.

Early population

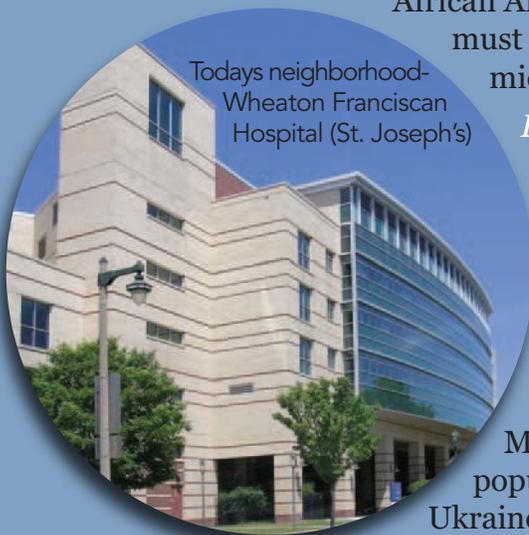
The first arrivals to the area were primarily Germans and Czechs migrating from various Milwaukee neighborhoods. Later migrants were diverse groups representing over 20 nations from nearly every continent. However, the largest of the later arriving groups were Jewish and African American. To understand the later migration patterns, one must look to another Milwaukee neighborhood that thrived in the middle of the 20th century.

Bronzeville origins

Bronzeville had been home to the ancestors of many key players in the current Sherman Park neighborhood. The community that would be called Bronzeville by many residents was located in an area between downtown Milwaukee and North Avenue and roughly 1st Street to 17th Street (the widest of the varying boundaries given by local scholars).

The area had first been home to a large segment of Milwaukee's German community. By 1910 a 10,000-strong population of Jewish immigrants from Poland, Russia, and the Ukraine had settled in the area. Within a few years African Americans from the South began their Great Migration to the North in response to needs to fill jobs in mainly urban centers. By the 1950s the black population in Bronzeville and nearby areas was nearly 50,000.

Two institutions that would later be critical to the stability of St. Joseph's neighborhood, were founded in the Bronzeville area. The Wheaton Franciscan Hospital (also known as St. Joseph's) had its roots in a little house on Walnut Street and built its first hospital on 4th & Reservoir. The second is Beth Jehudah synagogue, which had its beginnings with the Twerski family on 11th and North Avenue until the 1950s. Both institutions are today in St. Joseph's neighborhood (see photos below).



Many of the older activist families in Sherman Park lived in or had close relatives in the Bronzeville area before migrating northwest. In fact, the Bronzeville area had two dynasty families that would later be critical to the development of Sherman Park and surrounding areas. The Twerskis were one dynasty family. They had founded the Beth Jehudah synagogue. The Coggs were another dynasty family and today occupy many leadership roles in Milwaukee politics.

What happened to Bronzeville? Bronzeville was leveled in the 1950s and 1960s. During these years, two government programs were displacing major populations in Milwaukee. One program was the Urban Renewal Administration, which had been designed to improve central city housing. During the same time period, the Milwaukee County Expressway Commission was building major freeway corridors in the heart of the city. One corridor ran right through the heart of Bronzeville. Over 8,000 homes were lost and nearly 100 percent of its business district.

Early businesses in the St. Joseph neighborhood

The main business district in the St. Joseph neighborhood has been along Burleigh Street. Per the Milwaukee City Directory, these were the businesses on Burleigh between 45th and 60th Streets in 1940 and 1950. See summary notes following both charts.

1940

<i>Address (W. Burleigh)</i>	<i>Business/organization name from Milwaukee City Directory</i>
4505	Emile C. Horn Drugs
4506	Zoeller's Associated Foods
4508	Erwin Ballmann meats
4510	Burton's Photo Shop
4515	John Gleich Baker
4515	Sherman Park Hardware
4515	Hugo Kneer Tavern
4517	Sherman Park Shoppe Inc. (dry goods)
4518	Fayette Beauty Salon
4520	Lakritz Food Mart
4521	Aristotle Staver Shoe shop
4523-25	Walter Liermann Shoe Repair/Tailor
4524	Charm Sweet Shop
4526	Crimi Umberto Barber
4532	Martin Kramarich Tavern

<i>Address (W. Burleigh)</i>	<i>Business/organization name from Milwaukee City Directory</i>
4602	Johnson's Service Station
4610	Clark's Beer Depot
4614	Schroeder Bros. Real Estate
4616	Hugo Keihl Flower Shop
4618	Pearl Hosiery Co.
4620	Samuel Krakow Optometrist
4622	Lady Sherman Beauty Shop
4624	Roger Shermak Gifts (with postal station)
4632	Sherman Theater
4634	Samuel W. Feldman Grocer
4642	Schwister's Super Service station
4705 (apts)	Israel Kastrul (repairman)
4711	Heldrick Liberty Barber
4712-16	Paepke's Home Bakery
4713 (apts)	
4715	LaBelle's Grocery
4719 (apts)	
4720 (apts)	
4721	Manor Beauty Salon
4723	Man Lee Laundry
4725	Joseph Verzal Shoe Repair
4726	Venetian Cleaners & Furriers
4727	Frank Fritz Tailor
4728	Aristotle Staver Hat Cleaner
4729	Fleischer's Meat Market
4803	Louis Kaufmann & Sons Funeral
4821 (apts)	
4822	Fred W. Weiss Auto Repair

<i>Address (W. Burleigh)</i>	<i>Business/organization name from <u>Milwaukee City Directory</u></i>
4829	Myers Food Shop & Deli
4833	Petite Beauty Salon
4900	M & N Oil Co. The Filling Station
4930	Alvin Bartelt Grocery & Meats
4932 (apts)	
4934	Rustic Gardens Tavern
5000	Freeze & Kausch Inc. Appliances
5002 (apts)	
5004	Beauty Clinic
5006	Henry Mayer Barber
5010 (apts)	
5022 (apts)	
5028	Emelie Christeck Tavern (husband Ernest may have died) German born
5030	Emelie Christeck Dentist
5032	Rilling Pharmacy
5101	Rudolph Henkelman Filling Station
5125	Lyal O. Thompson Filling Station
5226	Pentecostal Evangelical Church
5300	Marquardt's Pharmacy
5304	Max Berlowitz Grocery & Meat
5413 (vacant)	
5512	Raymond Ebel Grocery & Meats
5514	Leonard Johnson Barber

<i>Address (W. Burleigh)</i>	<i>Business/organization name from <u>Milwaukee City Directory</u></i>
5516	Green Log Tavern
5615	Aaron Sehreny 6 Junk
5625	Robert Schmideler Filling Station
5632-36	Roland Ward Grocer
5722	Joseph Schmidt Filling Station
5911	Baermann Florists
5929	Henry C. Glienke Grocer and Meats (2)

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

- The proprietors in 1940 were highly diverse.
- As in most Milwaukee neighborhoods prior to 1970, most shopkeepers lacked a high school education.
- Emil C. Horn, the druggist, was a 3rd generation American with German ancestry. His father, Henry C. Horn, had owned the drugstore before him. Emil was one of the few proprietors on the street with a high school education.
- Hugo Adolph Otto Kneer, the barkeeper, was the son of German immigrants. He and his wife Margie lived on Burleigh, probably at the same address as his tavern.
- Aristotle Staver, with the shoe shop and the hat cleaning shop, was a Greek immigrant. He also lived on Burleigh in 1940, probably at the same address as his shop. Informants in the oral history project of Sherman Park (see below) often referred to a time in mid-century when there was a significant Greek population in the neighborhood.
- Crimi Umberto, the barber, was Italian.
- Samuel Feldman, the grocer, was a Jewish immigrant from Russia.
- Mon Lee, with the laundry, was a Chinese immigrant. He was a single man and lived on Burleigh, probably at the same address as his business.
- Louis Kaufman, the funeral director, was the son of German immigrants. Although he occupied a place of status in the neighborhood, he only had a 6th grade education.
- Emelie Christeck, the dentist and barkeep, was a widowed immigrant from Germany. Even though she is listed as a dentist in the 1940 Milwaukee City Directory, she only went to 5th grade in school.
- Roland Ward, the grocer, was a Canadian immigrant

1950

Address (W. Burleigh)	Business/organization name from <i>Milwaukee City Directory</i>
4504	Opitz Erhard Gift Shop
4506	Jacobis Lloyd Grocery & meats
4508	Robinevitz Merris Meats
4510	Jacklin Heating & Sheet Metal
4514	Sherman Park Hardware Store
4515	Elmer Klauk Tavern
4517	Sherman Park Shoppe (dry goods)
4518	Natco Service Motion Picture Films
4519	Elmer Klauk/Aristotle Staver
4521	Aristotle Shaver Shoe Repair
4523	Walens Electrical Appliance
4524	Charm Sweet Shop
4525	Moeller Shoe Repair
4526	Luck Meyer Meats
4532	Phillip Yahnke Tavern
4602	Natural Tea Co.
4607	Anton Romyak Gas Station
4610	Merkaw Parks Men's Clothing
4612	Sydney Rubenstein Dentist
4614	Mrs. Petersen's Bakery
4616	Tompkins Ice Cream Co.
4618	Wilson's Apparel
4620	Spic & Span Dry Cleaners
4622	Sherman Beauty Salon
4623	Kohl Brothers Grocery (this would then be Max & Jack? Or another brother?)
4624	Mollgaard Co. Real Estate
4626	Jack Berman Variety Store
4630	Fritz Von Grossman Architect

<i>Address (W. Burleigh)</i>	<i>Business/organization name from <u>Milwaukee City Directory</u></i>
4630	Donald Grieb Designer
4630	John. B. Sprague Chiropractor
4630	Millaeger Well Drilling Co.
4630	Michael Cavanaugh Dentist
4630	Donald W. Guepe Dentist
4630	Leonard Schneberger Physician
4630	Merklein, Knauf & Cummings Lawyers
4630	E. W. Voss Insurance
4630	North American Life Insurance of Chicago
4632	Sherman Theater
4634	Shroeder Bros. Building Contractors
4642	GCA Tractor & Equipment Co.
4642	J&E Auto Service
4704	Melvin Collins Gas Station
4705 (apts)	
4711	Liberty Heldrick Barber
4713 (apts)	
4714	George L. Paepke
4715-17	Torp Sports Mart
4716	Robert Harvey Bakery
4719 (apts)	
4720 (apts)	
4721	Manor Beauty Salon
4725	Robert Lovell Shoe Repair
4726	Frank Fritz Tailor
4728	Clark's Beer Depot
4729	Frank Fleischer Grocery & Meats
4803	Louis Kaufmann & Sons Funeral
4809	Hilbert Kaufmann

<i>Address (W. Burleigh)</i>	<i>Business/organization name from <u>Milwaukee City Directory</u></i>
4812	Pyramid Savings & Loan
4816	Umberto Crimi Barber
4818	Umberto Crimi Barber
4821 (apts)	
4822	Himmelstein Service Station
4829	Charlotte Meyers Confectioners
4833	Petite Beauty Salon
4900	Peyton's Super Service Station
4930	Alvin Bartlett Grocery & Meats
4932 (apts)	
4934	Rustic Gardens Tavern
5000	Northwest Radio & Appliance
5002 (apts)	
5004	VE Kennedy Co. Cup Manufacturers
5006	Howard Hannot Barber
5010 (apts)	
5022 (apts)	
5028	Klein's Taverns
5032	Rilling Pharmacy
5101	Edw. Weiss Gas Station
5226	Pentecostal Evangelical Lutheran Church
5300	Marquardt Drugs
5304	Martin Wengler Grocery & Meats
5501	Rudolph Muelhaus Physician
5512	Carl Kaddats Meats

<i>Address (W. Burleigh)</i>	<i>Business/organization name from <u>Milwaukee City Directory</u></i>
5512	Norwood Food Market
5514	Windowcraft Studio
5516	Ray's Green Log Tavern
5515	Aaron Sebreny Junk Dealer
5625	Rohland Mesenbourg Gas Station
5632	Sydney Burr Barber
5722	Burleigh Super Service
5800	Baermann Florists

Notes per census and other records (note that 1950 census records were unavailable at the time of this compilation, so limited information was found):

- The pattern on Burleigh remained the same in 1950 as it was in 1940. Most of the proprietors were immigrants of diverse backgrounds and almost none but the professionals had high school educations.
- Erhard Opitz with the gift shop, was a German immigrant. He was only 24 in 1950.
- Morris Robinevitz, the butcher, was a Jewish immigrant from Russia. He had only completed the 3rd grade.
- Aristotle Shaver, the Greek immigrant, still owned his hat and shoe businesses.
- Kohl Brothers Grocery might have been Max & Jack Kohl of future Senator Herb Kohl's family.
- Donald Grieb was an architect with a college degree. He was raised in the Sherman Park neighborhood and his father was a building contractor.
- Frank Fritz, the tailor, was an Austrian immigrant who had been raised on Galena.
- Carl Kaddats, the butcher, was the grandson of German immigrants. He'd been raised on Hawley Rd.
- The most likely correct record for Sydney Burr was the 1940 census that lists him as an American Indian who had been raised in Shawano Wisconsin. He would have been Menominee.

Current populations (as of 2017)

As new populations left the central city and moved into the area, the neighborhood faced its own challenges. At times residents struggled to understand cultural differences, a challenge that still exists today when new populations arrive.

The ethnic groups themselves were internally diverse, and some moved in and out of the area. The history of the Jewish population in the neighborhood was particularly complex. The original Jewish population was comprised of Reform and non-practicing Jews. When this

population migrated out of the neighborhood and into the suburbs, they were eventually replaced by a strong Orthodox population that lives in St. Joseph's and all of Sherman Park today, and worships at Beth Jehudah Synagogue. They developed their own self-help organization and school (Yeshiva Elementary School).

The largest ethnic group in the St. Joseph's neighborhood is African American (just over 8 in 10). They also developed their own self-help organizations and faith communities in the area. Many attend the William T. Sherman Multi Cultural Arts School (see photo below).

By Milwaukee standards, home ownership is relatively high in St. Joseph's, with nearly half of the property units occupied by owners. Over three-quarters of select owner costs (e.g., mortgages, taxes, contracts to purchase, insurance, deeds of trust) go for between \$1,001 and \$2,000 a month. Rents are modest with most rental units going for \$500 to \$1,000 a month. Annual household incomes are typical for Milwaukee.

IMPORTANT NEIGHBORHOOD FEATURES

- **Wheaton Franciscan Health Center--St. Joseph's**, at 5000 W. Chambers St.
- **Burleigh Street Community Development Corporation**, at 4630 W. Burleigh St.

RECURRING NEARBY OUTINGS

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.

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

These outings are provided courtesy of MECAH Publishing.

QUOTES FROM RESIDENTS

Quotes from oral history of Sherman Park conducted by Urban Anthropology Inc. in 2009¹: About THEN

“We escaped before the deportation. Hitler came to power in 1933 when I was eight years old. I had my parents, an older brother and a younger sister. My family knew he was dangerous. It started when we were not allowed to go to a public school. No universities. We had to open up Jewish schools. People that in the past had been your friends would spit at us and say, “Go back to Palestine.” It was not safe. My dad had a butcher shop. The SS came to his shop and ordered a boycott. They stood there with rifles and no one would come. My dad closed his business down in 1936. We weren’t allowed to shop at Gentile stores or go to public places. The signs said, ‘Jews not wanted,’ or ‘Jews and dogs not allowed.’ Where we lived I saw Jews dragged from their homes and beaten almost to death. Everyone was afraid of going to the camps. We lived in the city of Darmstadt in southern Germany, close to Frankfurt. We tried to get affidavits to get out of Germany and were turned down several times. We couldn’t find relatives in the States that could support five of us. Then in 1938 in summer (just before Crystal Night in November 10) a cousin of my mother sent an affidavit back. We left with \$10 in our pocket. . . We came here to this neighborhood 43 years ago.”

“When I was thirteen I was selling stuff door to door for the Salvation Army. I lived in the Projects. I never saw these people here as Germans or Jews or anything. I saw them as rich white folks. Sometimes I would go to a house and I would be invited in. I never saw houses like this. We never had any moldings in our house and just linoleum. I looked in a saw real fire coming out of a wall—a fireplace. My friend Jackie didn’t want to go in, but I did. I was fascinated with the old chenille bedspreads with flowers on them. I said, ‘One day, I would live here.’ We moved here in 1991.”

“We were on 54th & Center and moved to 52nd & Burleigh. We had the building and expanded this. Grandfather’s synagogue, Jacob Twerski, was on 11th & North until 1950. Many families joined us later. It was gradual, through word of mouth. People came from all over.”

“My earliest memories of Sherman Boulevard? Jewish, there was a lot of Jewish people there, a lot of Synagogues there at the time. The people in our home were Italian. Herb Kohl and Bud Selig all lived in the neighborhood, but so was Lee Dreyfus. His kids went to the same school as my kids. Who else was there? The head of Department of Corrections who lived there, Sanger Powers. Mixed.”

“There was one Catholic church in the neighborhood when we moved in. It was called St. Catherine’s Church on the corner of 51st & Center. So that hasn’t changed at all. What’s changed is the Protestant churches and the synagogues. I will give you some examples of the synagogues which I know best. The largest synagogue in the neighborhood when I was a boy was Temple Bethel which was at 3735 N. Sherman Boulevard. That was sold to a church, it is now the Parklawn Assembly of God Church. Case two, Congregation Beth Jehudah, 2700 N. 54th St. is now the Milwaukee Multi-cultural Academy. Not a church, but a school. There was a synagogue at 5920 W. Burleigh. That is now the Milwaukee Jewish Community Funeral home. There was another called Temple Menorah. It was located at 5015 W. Center St. They

added an educational wing. They sold it to the Damascus Church. The original synagogue building burnt down. The Damascus Church is now using the school building, which was originally built for Temple Menorah. Temple Menorah is now located at 9000-something North 76th. Another important place in the Jewish community was the home for aged Jews, 2300 block of north 50th street. That was sold to a community based residential facility. I think it's called Wilson House now. The Jewish home for the aged is now under a slightly different name. It is now located at 1414 N. Prospect Ave. It's called the Jewish Home and Care Center. They moved in 1973. Among the Christian churches, I'm not as familiar. There is one on the 2600 block of north 53rd Street. It used to be German, now it's all black. The Lutheran church is still there. I don't know of any that just closed. In some cases they were sold from one congregation to a different congregation. So, if a person was just walking by you wouldn't know the difference.”

“And we had movie theaters, and each movie theater was different. Generally Uptown was for the high school kids. And Sherman Boulevard was for Jewish kids. Parkway was for junior high school kids, and the Sherman Theater on Burleigh was also for junior high school kids, but mostly the Jewish kids hung out there. It was the center of the Jewish neighborhood. And the Savoy down on 26th or 27th and Center, that was for grade school kids. So as we grew up and progressed through the grades we went to different places. And we had Comet Theater up on 34th where the Boys and Girls club is now, on that corner—and that was when we were little grade school kids back with the 25 cent cartoon Saturdays with Roy Rogers and the Dark Shadow—the guy with the black hat and the black cape.”

Quotes from oral history of Sherman Park conducted by Urban Anthropology Inc. in 2009: About NOW

“There’s been an influx of Orthodox lately--you see more in the way of Kosher meat markets. There used to be seven synagogues, now down to one. The dominant Jewish influence is the Orthodox or Hasidic. An international leader of the Hasidic lives across the street from us, in the house that Herb Kohl grew up in. They are recruiting people here from everywhere, even Israel and New York. It is more than a movement—is like a branch. They are very important. They were on 54th and Center and they walked a long way on the Sabbath. I like to watch them during High Holy Days when you see them going to their ceremonies.”

“The hospital has expanded greatly and very much a foundation and an anchor, especially around this neighborhood. We have been very involved in the building of Burleigh Street. If you walk across the street, we have a civic park that is used for community efforts. It’s property that is owned and operated by the City of Milwaukee in a three-phase plan to develop Burleigh Street and Sherman Blvd. We have been very, very involved in the quality of life and keeping up the neighborhood’s image, so I think from that standpoint, the community has been enhanced. The hospital has really helped a lot in this area specifically.”

“I personally organized three home tours. They were quite elaborate and included the original homeowners present inside the house. They were covered in the *Journal Sentinel* and was a result of the Sherman Park Preservation Committee. There have also been garden tours, however, much of the media attention has been negative, for example, the cruising issues. But this is counterbalanced by positive things like the Easter Egg Hunt.”

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-
Beth Jehudah Synagogue



Today's neighborhood-Kosher meat market and other businesses
along 48th and Burleigh

Today's neighborhood-
St. Catherine's School



Today's neighborhood-
Houses at 53rd and Chambers



Today's neighborhood-
William T. Sherman Multi Cultural
Arts School



For more information on Milwaukee neighborhoods, refer to John Gurda's *Milwaukee, City of Neighborhoods*.

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 Dr. Jill Florence Lackey at: jflanthropologist@currently.com