

**Approximate boundaries:**  
N-W. Florist Ave; S-W. Silver Spring Dr;  
E-N. Teutonia Ave; W-N. Sherman Blvd

# NORTHWEST SIDE *Thurston Woods*

## NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION

Thurston Woods borders Brown Deer to the east and the Milwaukee neighborhood of Old North Milwaukee to the south. The neighborhood has a high population density with diverse housing stock including mid-20th century Cape Cods, colonial-style houses and early 20th century bungalows and Tudors. The business corridor is along West Silver Spring Drive.

Thurston Woods' topography is flat to gently rolling hills throughout the neighborhood. Most of the streets follow a rectangular grid. Some streets just west of North Teutonia Avenue proceed at a slight diagonal. North Sherman Boulevard on the western border of Thurston Woods curves slightly and also runs at a slight diagonal. There is no public green space or park in the neighborhood, but the Havenwoods State Forest is just west of the Thurston Woods border. See neighborhood photos below.

## HISTORY

Over 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. Today's

Thurston Woods was once within the Town of Granville. The neighborhood was named after Thurston Avenue that runs through its center and the

wooded Havenwood State Forest (i.e., "Woods") on the area's western border. Thurston Avenue got its designation from William J.

Thurston who moved to Milwaukee from Ohio in the late 1800s. Thurston owned a successful oyster business in the area and also dabbled in real estate, hence the naming of the street.

### Early populations

In the middle of the nineteenth century, a Menomonee Indian village or encampment was identified near the area that would become Fairfield. This was also the time that the first Europeans appeared in the wider Granville region—many of whom would have relationships with the indigenous settlers (see quotes below from *The Golden Years of Yesteryear* by Emily Treichel Boehlke below).

According to the *Milwaukee Sentinel* (March 22, 1877) there were originally three small European settlements in the Granville area. 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, Lake, Dutcher, and Norton families. They gave their new home the name of their former home in New York.

Today's neighborhood-  
Houses on N. 35th St.  
and W. Thurston Ave.



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” (actually 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 west of the Fairfield neighborhood on 107th Street.

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 near the Fairfield area. Some Irish settlements extended 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.

#### *Germans and more Germans*

In the early years of the 20th century a very different German community arrived to the Granville area. 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 of many from the area. Some ended up in Granville Township (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 south of today’s Fairfield neighborhood. 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*

Economic prosperity reigned in Granville, due partially to the work ethic of the 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—today including industrial parks and scores of companies.

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.

The following is a sample of a few businesses that were incorporated into Milwaukee at the time of annexation on Silver Spring Drive between North Teutonia and Sherman Boulevard. See summary points below.

| <i>Addresses on W. Silver Spring in 1961</i> | <i>Businesses and organizations from <u>Milwaukee City Directory</u></i>   |
|--|--|
| 3001   | Marty's Shell Service Station  |
| 3002   | Chris Corners Recreational Tavern and Bowling Alleys   |
|  |  |
| 3432   | Hanel Gas Station  |
|  |  |
| 3500   | Harry's Tap  |
| 3503   | Boulevard Cleaners & Dyers   |
| 3570   | Beimbern Liquor Store  |
| 3513   | Edith Ann Beauty Shop  |
| 3514   | Edith Ann Beauty Shop  |
| 3514   | Hansen Delicatessen  |
| 3518   | Bob's Tavern (Robert A. Mueller)   |
| 3520   | Johnny's Barber Shop   |
| 3526   | Silver Spring Hardware   |
| 3528   | Lambert's Television Specialist  |
| 3530   | Silver Spring Tavern   |
|  |  |
| 3600   | Sullivan's Sonaco Service Station  |
| 3620   | Morris Pharmacy  |
| 3622   | Casper L. Berner Physician<br>Calvin J. Gander Dentist<br>David M. Mehigan Physician<br>Donald S. Horowitz Dentist |
| 3624   | Ruswick & Haberman Lawyers<br>G.C. Dreyer Real Estate  |
| 3628   | Tidy's Gas Station   |
|  |  |
| 3804a  | Francis J. Ehley Contractor  |
|  |  |
| 3904   | Ralph Reese Landscape Company  |

| <i>Addresses on W. Silver Spring in 1961</i> | <i>Businesses and organizations from <u>Milwaukee City Directory</u></i> |
|--|--|
| 4016   | Silver Spring Food Mart  |
| 4202   | Tempel's Women's & Children's Apparel                                    |
| 4204   | North Point Foods  |
| 4210   | Arnold Hackbarth Contractor<br>Edwin Hackbarth Auto Repair               |

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

- All the trappings of a self-sufficient neighborhood were in Thurston Woods in 1961 with four healthcare providers, two grocers, a drugstore, a deli, a barber, a hardware store, a clothing shop, and two gas stations.
- Technically only the stores on the north side of the street were within the Thurston Woods neighborhood, but residents could easily access businesses on either side of the street.
- There is no evidence that the health professionals actually lived near their offices, which is somewhat of a departure from past times.
- Francis Ehley, the contractor, did live in the same building as his business. Of German extraction, he'd been raised in Menomonee Falls.
- Ralph Reese, the landscaper, was raised within three blocks of his business. He was the grandson of German immigrants.
- See information about the Hackbarths and their businesses below.

## **Thurston Woods business family**

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

### **The Hackbarths**

The Hackbarths were a pioneer Granville family. In 1961, both Arnold and his brother Edwin owned businesses at 4210 W. Silver Spring in today's Thurston Woods neighborhood. The family had been at this location since the first wave of Germans found their way to Granville.

The earliest record of the Hackbarths in Granville is in 1850 when Michael F. Hackbarth (born 1803 in Pomerania) purchased a tract of land from Milwaukee County. He then appeared in the 1855 Wisconsin State Census in Granville. A possible brother of Michael's was Bogisloff Hackbarth (born 1814 in Pomerania), a farmer, who also settled in Granville—possibly at the same Silver Spring location where later Hackbarths lived. His son William married Lina Hintz, whose family had also come from Pomerania about the same time as the Hackbarths arrived. The couple had at least two children.

One child was Robert Hackbarth. Robert Hackbarth married Joanna/Hannah M. Burrow. Joanna's family also had deep roots in Germany and in Granville. The couple lived at the property on Silver Spring Road with the rest of the Hackbarths. Soon Robert took up the occupation as a self-employed well-driller—a trade very much in demand before Granville consolidated with Milwaukee to get Lake Michigan water.

The couple's first three children were Arnold, Gladys, and Gertrude (*see photo*). A few years later came Edwin. (*See childhood photos from public records at Ancestry.com*).

Both Arnold and Edwin followed their ancestral tradition of being independent businessmen. Arnold became an electrical contractor and Edwin started his own auto repair business. They kept their shops on their Silver Spring tract. When the United States declared war against Japan in 1941, Arnold enlisted and served in the U.S. Army for the duration of the war. Edwin enlisted in 1943 and served the duration. It is not known if either ever married.



### *Arrival of African Americans*

More change was coming to Thurston Woods and the former Granville area. African Americans began to migrate in for two reasons: (1) available industrial jobs, and (2) the need for housing following the leveling of their former central city home known as Bronzeville ([see Halyard Park neighborhood](#) for details). As in most Milwaukee neighborhoods where the dominant population was German, integration proceeded without incident. Many African American families were now finding their way into the middle class.

Unfortunately, the deindustrialization movement that began in the 1980s reversed this course. Manufacturing employment in Milwaukee fell 77 percent, from a peak in 1963 to the present. What had been a working and middle class area on the Northwest Side was in decline.

### Current populations (as of 2021)

Today, most of the Germans have left Thurston Woods. Nearly three-quarters of the 4,000+ residents of the neighborhood are African Americans. The rest are mainly European Americans, with just over 250 claiming German ancestry. There is also a scattering of Latinos (about half Puerto Rican and the rest of Mexican and other Caribbean ancestry), Asians (all of Hmong or Thai descent), American Indians, and residents of mixed racial ancestry in the area.

The median household income for Thurston Woods is approximately \$36,000, placing the neighborhood in the lower middle-income stratum. The largest number of occupations claimed by Thurston Woods' adult residents are in the fields of administration, production, transportation, and healthcare support. There are over twice the number of adults in the transportation industry than their proportions in other Milwaukee 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.

### 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      |

### SLEDDING--MCGOVERN

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

### RHYTHM & BLOOM CONCERT SERIES

| When?                                  | Where?   | Description and contact info                         | Admission |
|--|--|--|-----------|
| Late Jul.to mid Aug., Thu.'s, 6-8:30pm | Green Tree Community Garden, 60th & Green Tree Rd. | Concerts with a variety of bands, food, food trucks. | 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

**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.”

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“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.<sup>1</sup>—About THEN.**

“And then as I grew up there, the subdivisions were developed around our home, and you know, some industries and some shopping centers and I remember a lot of the annexation activities that took place. And there were some battles between Brown Deer and what was then the Town of Granville and then eventually of course, the City of Milwaukee annexed the area that included Granville Station.”

“I was only, you know, maybe seven to eight years old at the time that was all going on so I didn’t really pay that much attention to it. But I have a lot of memories, like I said, of that area and I went to preschool at St. Catherine’s, which has been there for a long, long time. And then I went to high school what was called at the time Granville High School until [the] 1960s. I started there in 1964 as a freshman. And then in 1966 they changed the name from Granville to Brown Deer High School to recite [respect?] the fact that at that time that now resided in the village of Brown Deer.”

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

“The first time I arrived to the neighborhood was back in 2012. I did an internship back at the church where I work. It seemed nice in the neighborhood and quiet. It looked old, yet new. There’s two really old churches in the neighborhood but there’s still some modern homes. And then there’s also--you can tell--the expansion [that] happened in the 80s and the 90s. You could tell by the architecture, but there wasn’t a lot of upkeep since then. A lot of people say it looks like the country here because there aren’t a lot of sidewalks or street lights. I guess that is kind of annoying because I have kids. That’s one of the things that I noticed right away that there’s no sidewalks but there’s ditches.”

“I think it’s changed in [that] the poverty line has moved north as far as the city. It’s been sort of like the last great frontier of the city. So you know a lot of people who have the right socioeconomics have moved out that way. I’ve seen a lot of people who are original owners who have left. Some of the income property that were owned by realty companies that were like starter homes have been sold to individual landlords. Which has created absentee land. And it’s changed. The diversity is changing also. So I guess you could say that it’s becoming more diverse.”

# PHOTOS



Today's neighborhood-  
A row of bungalows on  
N. 34th St near W. Thurston Ave.

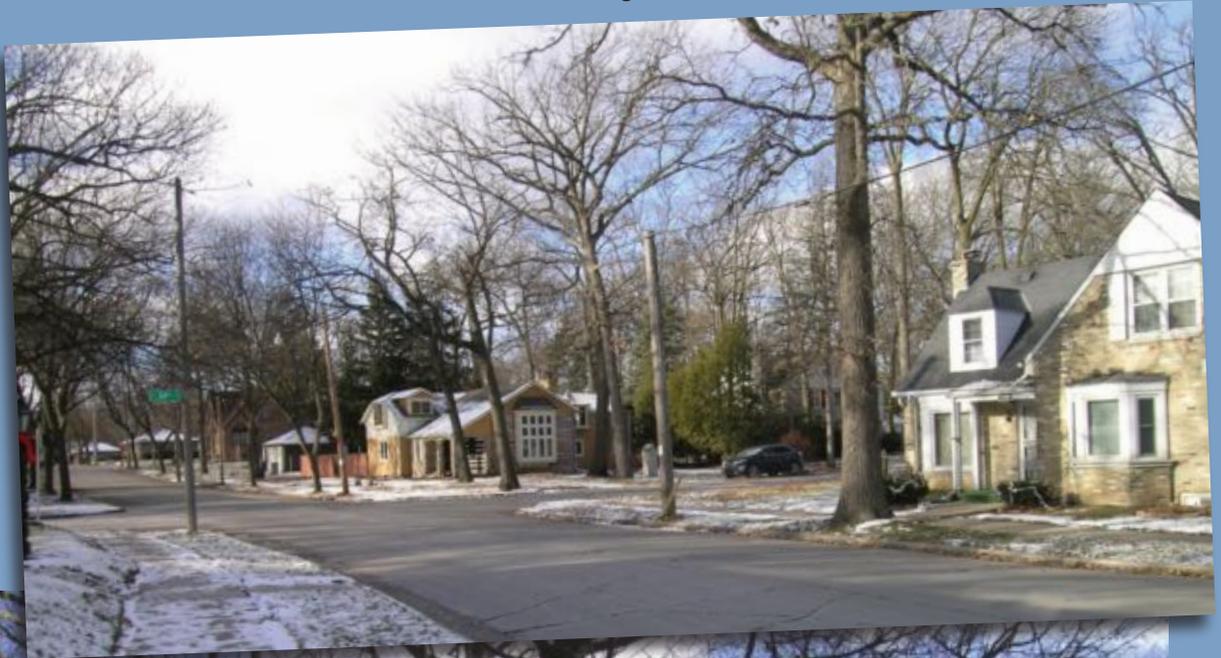


Today's neighborhood-  
Houses on N. 35th St.  
and W. Thurston Ave.



Today's neighborhood-  
Houses on N. 34th St. & W.  
Thurston Ave. looking east

Today's neighborhood-Houses on N. 34th St. & W. Thurston Ave. looking west



Today's neighborhood-  
Playfield to the east of Thurston  
Woods Public School



Today's neighborhood-  
Businesses on W. Silver Spring  
Drive & N. 35th St.



Today's neighborhood-United Christian Church on W. Silver Spring Drive

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)

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<sup>i</sup> 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.