

Approximate boundaries:

N-W. Hampton Ave; **S**-W. Congress St;

E-N. Sherman Blvd; **W**-W. Parkway Dr

NORTHWEST SIDE *Wahl Park*

NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION

Wahl Park is a small neighborhood adorned with mainly one-story, wood frame Cape Cods and a number of Tudor style houses with stone facades. There is significant green space in the neighborhood including the banks of Lincoln Creek and a small park--also named Wahl Park. The park is 12.4 acres, with a basketball court, wading pool, tot lot, and a pavilion. A bust of Christian Wahl stands in front of the pavilion.

See neighborhood photos below.

HISTORY

The Wahl Park *neighborhood* was named after the park of the same name. And the park was named after Christian Wahl. Christian Wahl is often called the father of Milwaukee's public parks because he led most of the planning processes of the county's park system. However, Wahl never lived in or near the area that became Wahl Park. Born in Bavaria in 1829, he immigrated to America and moved to a farm five miles south of the city's boundaries in 1848. He later settled in Chicago and ran a glue factory with his brother. There he served on Chicago's city council and board of education.

Wahl retired a wealthy man. He returned to Milwaukee, purchased a home on Prospect Avenue, and became the president of the first City Park Board in the board's first decade. His leadership was instrumental in the development of the city's park system and he took personal interest in Lake Park.

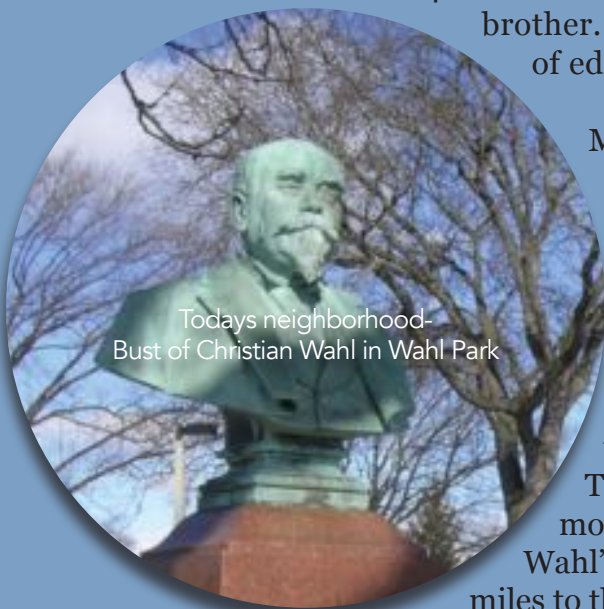
When Wahl died in 1901, *Der Herald*, Milwaukee's German-language newspaper, stated that his altruistic efforts deserved a monument. Between 1901 and 1903, with the support of Milwaukee citizens, Gaetano Trentanove designed and sculpted the bust of Wahl. The monument was initially placed in Lake Park because of Wahl's contributions to that park's completion. In 1956, many miles to the northwest, a 12-acre green space was named after Christian Wahl and became Wahl Park. By 1960 the bust was moved from

Lake Park to Wahl Park.

The surrounding neighborhood was just filling up in the 1950s and 1960s.

Early populations

The area that today is the Wahl Park neighborhood was once the northern tip of the unincorporated, rural Town of Wauwatosa. According to an 1855 map, the boundaries of the Town of Wauwatosa were Greenfield to the south, Hampton to the north, 27th Street to the east, and 127th Street to the west. Most of the Town of Wauwatosa settlers were migrants from its eastern neighbor, Milwaukee, and most of these were Germans. The City of Milwaukee would later annex much of the Town of Wauwatosa.



Today's neighborhood-
Bust of Christian Wahl in Wahl Park

The Wahl Park area had originally shared its northern border with Granville Township. Granville—that also later consolidated with Milwaukee--had attracted several waves of German immigrants between the mid-1800s and early 1900s. These included a wave of Pennsylvania “Dutch” (actually Germans) who arrived from Telford, Pennsylvania in the 1840s; and German Russians who had left Germany for Russia’s Volga River area in the late 1700s and later immigrated to America and Wisconsin between 1910 and 1920. Parts of this German population would spill over to the Wahl Park area in later generations.

By 1940, there were sparse settlements of residents on the streets within the Wahl Park boundaries (e.g., only five families each on North 58th and North 59th Streets and none on Sherman Boulevard). While most residents were German (including one German Russian family), there were also Swedish and Danish families. Below is the profile of one of the neighborhood residents, randomly selected from the 1940 Milwaukee City Directory.

Wahl Park Random Resident

*Name selected randomly from the 1940 City Directory in the Wahl Park area
(other information found in census records)*

Arthur August Rummel

In 1940, Arthur Rummel, age 45, lived at 4512 N. 58th Street in a home he owned. The son of German immigrants, Arthur was one of those residents who had gradually moved west from Milwaukee. In 1930 he’d lived on North 48th Street and in 1920 he’d lived on Sycamore. In 1940 his household included a wife Laura and a 14-year-old son. The boy was the son of Arthur and a previous wife, Ella. Laura, the wife in 1940, was 17 years younger than Arthur. While Arthur had only completed the 8th grade, his wife had gone to college.

Arthur listed his occupation in the 1940 census as a truck smith, which implied that he was a metal worker involved in the production or repair of trucks or railroad cars. He worked for the railroad yards--possibly those in Granville.

Arthur’s parents, Ernest Frederick Rummel and Johanette Volbracht, had emigrated from “Waldeck/Waldeck und Pyrmont” in Germany. The couple had purchased land in Kewaskum in 1892 before moving into Milwaukee County.

The importance of Hampton Avenue

Hampton Avenue was the major business corridor in the Wahl Park neighborhood. It was named by Festus Stone in 1888 during the development of a subdivision on the city’s far north side. Stone apparently saw strong marketing potential for the street and named it after Hampton, England, located at the edge of London.

The following chart lists the enterprises that were on Hampton Avenue within the Wahl Park boundaries in 1961. See summary and notes below.

<i>Addresses on W. Hampton Ave. in 1961</i>	<i>Names of businesses, offices, apartments, and organizations from the <u>Milwaukee City Directory</u></i>
4327	Apartments
4401	Apartments
4415	Apartments
4511	Kenneth Brushaber Contractor
4720	Apartments
4740	Apartments
4800	Apartments
4901	Apartments
4912	Claude H. Bryant Appliances Repair and Service
4918	Apartments
4925	Red Owl Grocery Store
4938	Apartments
5000	Apartments
5009	Otto's Beer Depot
5020	Hampton Pharmacy
5022	Jerome R. Cornfield Physician Hampton Clinic Asher L. Cornfield Physician Bruno E. Schiffieger Dentist
5110	Pfaff Shell Gas/Service Station
5119	Hank's Barber Shop

<i>Addresses on W. Hampton Ave. in 1961</i>	<i>Names of businesses, offices, apartments, and organizations from the <u>Milwaukee City Directory</u></i>
5121	Hampton TV Repair
5130	Bakula's Frozen Custard Drive In
5209	Hampton Beverage Mart Beer & Wine
5210	Art's Trailor Rental Service (Arthur M. Ellingson)
5211	Ace Auto Parts Inc. Dealers
5219	Bill & Pat's Tavern (William E. Herget)
5226	Wisconsin Kitchen Mart Cabinets
5227	American Standard Service/Gas Station
5308	Burbach's Pilgrim's Market Grocery
5320	Al's Auto Body Shop and Repair
5334	Joe & Ann's Tavern (Joseph Gscheidmeier)
5341	Biele's Bakery
5343	State Farm Insurance Company, District Office
5400	Tastee Freez Drive In, Frozen Desserts
5403	Kem's Bar
5428	P. K. Food Mart
5443	Tony's Shoe Repair
5504	Pete's Sinclair Service Station
5507	Lester R. Heinrich's Gas Station
5516	Nancy's Beauty Salon
5538	Church of the Nazarene
5600	Drasch Lawn & Garden Center Nursery
5601	Buetow Hardware
5615	James E. Geigler Physician
5639	Jelacis Funeral Home (Valentine Jelacic)

Addresses on W. Hampton Ave. in 1961	Names of businesses, offices, apartments, and organizations from the <u>Milwaukee City Directory</u>
5702	Bethel Baptist Church
5807	Garber & Son Well Drillers (Glen Garber)
5904	Automotive Filter & Equipment Company Automotive Parts
6000	Mt. Lebanon Lutheran Church

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

- The number of apartment complexes along this stretch of Hampton shows some of the breadth of the housing boom that followed World War II.
- The business corridor in 1961 did supply the basic needs of residents in terms of grocers, pharmacies, healthcare providers, religious organizations, and gas stations.
- The largest number of businesses on the street were auto services, including four gas stations and three auto repair and parts shops.
- Bars and liquor stores were also numerous.
- Mt. Lebanon Lutheran Church and School still exist on Milwaukee's Northwest Side. It belongs to the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod that was founded in Granville.
- Only a limited amount of information could be found on the shopkeepers, as the last available census at the time of this compilation was in 1940.
- William Herget, of Bill & Pat's tavern, grew up at that address. His parents, William and Alice Herget (nee Glasser), were German immigrants and had a tavern at that address in the 1950s. The father had completed the 8th grade. The education of the son is unknown.
- Joseph Gscheidmeier, with the tavern, had lived on N. 1st Street before opening his bar on Hampton. He was the son of German immigrants. He had completed the 8th grade.
- Valentine Jelacic, the funeral director, was the son of Czech immigrants. He had some college. His father was a brick mason, and the family lived in the Bronzeville area in 1930 and 1940.

Milwaukee's growing Northwest Side attracted its own newspapers. One of these was *The Northwest News*, published by Ed Bristol Advertising, with offices on 76th and Hampton Avenue. The editor of the newspaper was Manny Meyers, the one-time campaign consultant of Mayor Frank Zeidler. The biweekly newspaper operated between 1961 and 1966, with a couple of brief reincarnations.

During these years, people of color began to migrate to Milwaukee's Northwest Side. African Americans arrived for two reasons: (1) available industrial jobs on the Northwest Side and the area that had been Granville, 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 Germans dominated, the integration was relatively peaceful. Many African Americans were able to obtain family-supporting jobs and purchase homes.

Current populations (as of 2021)

Today, over half of the Wahl Park residents live in households that are in the low to lower middle-income categories, with annual incomes below \$50,000. The proportion of college degrees earned by residents over age 25 is average for Milwaukee, and the largest number of jobs claimed by residents are in the fields of administration, personal care, and education.

Over the decades, most of the German population left Wahl Park. Just under 150 people claim German ancestry in the area today, which accounts for the majority of the neighborhood's small European American population (comprising just over 1 in 10 residents). Over 8 in 10 residents are African Americans and approximately 1 in 20 are Asians (mostly Hmong/Lao). The rest are Latinos, mixed race/ethnicity, indigenous Africans, and American Indians. The neighborhood also skews young (with nearly 4 in 10 residents under the age of 20) and women substantially out-populate men (by more than 10 percent).

However, home ownership remains strong in the neighborhood. Just under half of the property units in Wahl Park are owned, as opposed to being rented. Home ownership costs are a buy, with about 6 in 10 select monthly costs (mortgages, deeds of trust, contracts to purchase, taxes, insurance) ranging from \$501 to \$1,000. Rents are also reasonable.

INTERESTING FEATURES

- **Wahl Park**, at 4750 N. 48th St., (see photo below and information above).
- **Bust of Christian Wahl**, at Wahl Park, (see photo below and information above).

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			
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

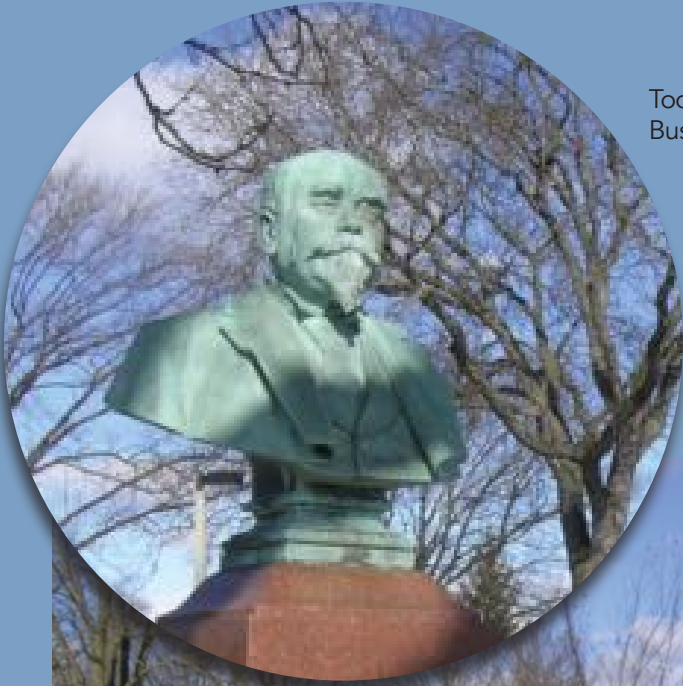
FREE FAMILY SWIM—WASHINGTON HS			
When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Tue.'s 6:00-6:55pm females; 7:00-7:55pm males	Washington H.S., 2525 N. Sherman Blvd., enter main gym door on Sherman Blvd.	Indoor swimming with swim caps available for purchase (children 7 and under must be accompanied by adult). 875-6025.	Free

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 in Wahl Park and wish to make an interesting observation about this neighborhood, please send your quote to JFLanthropologist@currently.com

PHOTOS



Today's neighborhood-
Bust of Christian Wahl in Wahl Park



Today's neighborhood-View of Wahl Park from W. Glendale Ave.



Today's neighborhood-
Houses 57th & Parkway Dr.



Today's neighborhood-
Houses 45th & Congress 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