

Approximate boundaries:

N-W. Oklahoma Ave; S-W. Howard Ave;

E-S. 6th St/I-94; W-S. 20th St

SOUTH SIDE *Morgandale*

NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION

The homes in Morgandale are mainly early 20th century bungalows and two-story wood frame houses. Most of the southeast corner of the neighborhood is occupied by St. Adalbert's Cemetery.

There are no major parks in Morgandale, but there are two playgrounds belonging to Milwaukee Public Schools--Holt Playfield and Ohio Playfield. See photos below.

HISTORY

Morgandale is one south side neighborhood among many that makes up today's Garden District. The boundaries of the Garden District are those of the 13th Aldermanic District. All Garden District neighborhoods had once been in the Town of Lake with boundaries of Lake Michigan to 27th Street and Greenfield to College Avenues. By the mid-1950s, the City of Milwaukee had annexed the areas that today comprise the Garden District.

Early populations

Many of the south side neighborhoods that comprise today's Garden District owe a debt to the dreams of a local Norwegian named John Saveland. Saveland owned a booming business on Water Street that provided provisions for fishing boats, steamships, and schooners that sailed from Milwaukee. And he also had an interest in real estate. In 1887 Saveland organized a group of investors that purchased 30 acres of land bordered by today's Bradley, Howard, Whitnall, and Howell.

The group hoped to attract upper middle class home buyers to their project—people who would work in the city and retire to their county estates at the end of the work day.

But despite a convenient Milwaukee streetcar with stops along Howell Avenue, few lots were sold in the early days. Saveland ultimately turned some of the land into a recreational venture, with an amusement hall and grounds. It wasn't until the time of Saveland's death in 1909 that the area was finally beginning to attract settlers. These were not the upper middle class professionals that Saveland had expected, but southside working class people—mostly Poles.

Morgandale businesses in 1935

The following table is a sample of the businesses on West Oklahoma within the Morgandale area that were serving residents at the height of the Great Depression in 1935. It provides a snapshot of the close-knit community life in Morgandale in its early days of settlement. See the notes at the end of the table.



Today's neighborhood-
Houses on 13th St. & Holt Ave.

<i>Addresses on W. Oklahoma</i>	<i>Businesses, organizations, offices from the Milwaukee City Directory</i>
733	Stanley Niemczynski Tavern
802	Sylvester Jawiecki Filling Station
803	Model Bakery
832	Art's Service Station
907	Lawrence Poth Filling Station
915	Industrial Service Laboratory
924	Constantine F. Sych Tailor and Shoe Repair
926	Belle Beauty Shop
928	Amanda Krzychi Dry Goods
932	Oklahoma Food Mart
933	South Star Market (Adolph Nalenz)
950	Stephen E. Piotrowski Drugs
1019	Joseph E. Sass Funeral Directors
1031	Benjamin Wisniewski Barber
1117	William B. Manske Barber
1121	Plaza Flower Shop
1122	St. Andrews Lutheran Hall
1125	Fashion Shoppe Women's Furnishings
1132	St. Andrew's Evangelical Lutheran Church
1202	Stanley Ufnowski Filling Station
1212	Stephen Markowski Carpenter and Construction
1224	Standard Oil Company Filling Station
1336	John S. Sobosinski Grocery and Meat Market
1337	Benjamin Zachowski Filling Station
1438	Frank Imanski Baker

<i>Addresses on W. Oklahoma</i>	<i>Businesses, organizations, offices from the Milwaukee City Directory</i>
1500	John G. Rewolinski Grocery and Meat Market
1513	John A. Struder Barber
1515	Stanley Moraski's Radio Shop
1519	John J. Kazmierowski Physician
1604	Public Utility Oil Company Filling Station
1629	Valentine A. Koszalka Tavern
2005	L. J. Mueller Furnace Co.

Notes from census and other public records:

- Most of the proprietors were Polish.
- Stanley Niemczynski, with the tavern at 733 W. Oklahoma, was a good example of a typical Morgandale resident in 1935. He and his wife lived above the tavern. He died in 1979 and his funeral was at the Sass Funeral home just up the street. He was buried at the neighborhood's St. Adalbert's Cemetery.
- Amanda Krzychi, the dry goods store owner, was a Pole who had been a tailor before owning her own shop.
- Stephen Piotrowski, the druggist, was the son of Polish immigrants and was raised on Windlake Ave. While operating the drug store, he lived in a home just two blocks east, on Oklahoma.
- Stanley Ufnowski, with the filling station, was a Polish immigrant who worked for a real estate company before starting his own business. His father, Joseph, had been a night watchmen for Harvester Mfg.
- Valentine Koszalka, the bar owner, was a Polish immigrant who had worked as a day laborer before saving enough funds to open his own business.
- Constantine Zych, with the tailor shop, was the son of a West Prussian immigrant. Constantine was very young when he opened his shop and remained living with his parents until well into the 1940s. The family lived just around the corner on S. 8th St.
- There were seven gas stations on the fourteen blocks covered, indicating the extreme reliance Morgandale residents had on the automobile by 1935
- Morgandale residents had their basic needs met in their neighborhood with grocery stores, butchers, bakeries, clothing stores, beauty shops, barbers, taverns, and drug stores.

Morgandale after World War II

Housing was reaching the Far South Side in the early 20th century, but it wasn't until the end of World War II that the housing market really began to boom. Veterans returning from the war. Newly arriving settlers were migrating from Near South Side and Historic South Side neighborhoods—mostly Poles, some Germans, and later in the century, Latinos. By the mid-1960s there were thousands of small ranch houses and cape cods extending to and beyond the Morgandale neighborhood.

Current populations (as of 2021)

Today the population in Morgandale is highly diverse. Nearly half the residents are Latino, approximately 3 percent each are African American and Asian, and the rest are European American or Middle Eastern. Approximately 1 in 6 of the residents are still Polish. The neighborhood attracts immigrants from a variety of countries, including Mexico, El Salvador, India, Vietnam, and China.

Property ownership is relatively high in Morgandale, with just under 6 in 10 property units owned. Rents are a bargain. Just under three-quarters of the rental units go for \$500 to \$1,000 a month.

Morgandale residents are mostly middle and lower middle class, with annual household incomes between \$25,001 and \$75,000. About 1 in 5 residents fall into the low income category, with annual household incomes under \$25,000. The highest number of occupations in the neighborhood are in the administrative, production, and sales fields. Just under 50 residents still make their living as farmers.

Gardening (or as some report—farming) is a major hobby among Morgandale residents. In 2008 the Common Council approved a resolution to name all the neighborhoods in the 13th Aldermanic District the *Garden District* of the City of Milwaukee, capitalizing on a long tradition of gardening among residents and businesses—going back to the Town of Lake years. At the time, Ald. Witkowski said, “Residents and businesses here have worked hard to solidify this identity. We have had perennial exchanges and gatherings, lectures by noted gardeners, and even awarded area businesses landscaping awards to encourage and foster the character of our area.” The idea for the Garden District grew from discussions between the alderman and residents about the interest in and tradition of gardening and landscaping within the district. The effort began in earnest in early 2007, when a group of individuals formalized a garden committee and met regularly to create a vision for the 13th Aldermanic District that focused on gardening and landscaping to beautify and improve quality-of-life.

INTERESTING FEATURES

- **Ascension Medical Group** at 3201 S. 16th St.
- **Saint Adalbert Cemetery** at 3801 S. 6th St., a resting place for much of the Polish population of Milwaukee.
- **S. 16th/W. Oklahoma Business Improvement District (BID)** assisting businesses in the Morgandale neighborhood.

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 4, 9am-10pm	Wilson Park, 1601 W. Howard Ave.	Parade, Doll Buggy, Bike & Trike, and Coaster judging, music, games, fireworks.	Free

MILWAUKEE FIRE MUSEUM			
When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
1st Sun. of each month, 1-4pm, (except holidays)	1516 W. Oklahoma Ave.	Opportunity to see exhibits and artifacts of the Milwaukee Fire Department back to the 1800s; stories of history of Department and fires.	Free

UMOS MEXICAN INDEPENDENCE DAY PARADE			
When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Mid Sep., Sun. 10am- 12pm	Starts at 20th & Oklahoma Ave.	Southside parade of arts, floats, local organizations honoring Mexican Independence Day.	Free

OPEN SWIM			
When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Daily, 1-5pm, holiday times vary	Pulaski Park, 2701 S. 16th St.	Open swim year-round at indoor pool with diving boards, locker rooms, vending machines.	unk

GARDEN DISTRICT FARMERS MARKET			
When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Early Jun. through mid-Oct., Sat.'s 1-5pm	Just south of Howard on 6th St.	Market of fresh vegetables and other vendors.	Free

GARDEN DISTRICT CRAFT FAIR			
When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late Apr., Sat. 9am-3pm	3333 S. Howell Ave.	Fair of over 25 vendors, concessions, prizes, bake sale, and more.	unk

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

Quotes from 2002 oral history conducted by Urban Anthropology Inc.¹—About THEN

“We did have housing taken down because of the freeway. My uncle lost his housing because of this. In those days they just took it. Eminent domain. He lost his hair, everything else. Just a nervous reaction.”

“Polish would have been the language you would hear. Not so much German. No. The area I grew up in had a German and a Polish cemetery, and the German cemetery is very tiny compared to the Polish one. If you walk through St. Adalbert’s you’ll get a lesson in Polish names.”

“I remember the earliest signs of a Latino presence in the neighborhood. There was a Mexican family that lived in one of the apartment buildings. He was a musician. Then there was this Mexican restaurant that opened on Layton. It had been called The Vagabond before the guy took it over. He then named it El Vagabond.”

“On the south side as I was growing up, there were street advancement groups. There was a 13th Street group, a Mitchell Street group, mainly businessmen, and they would sponsor things like fireworks in Wilson Park, Memorial Day parade—things like that. As I grew older, I learned about other groups like the Milwaukee Society of the Polish National Alliance. My boss invited me to a meeting and I joined that. There was a South Side Business Club and I am still a part of that. There was a group called the South Side Civic Association, now gone, and we’d be involved in civic activities. There was St. Joseph’s Foundation, dormant now, and it started as a group of 100 prominent men and go to the St. Joseph’s Orphanage once or twice a year and take the orphans to ballgames or sporting events. Most of the organizations that I remember existing were business organizations.”

Quotes from 2010 oral history updated by Urban Anthropology Inc.—About NOW

“Nine eleven was the big historical event for the neighborhood, but in a sort of a good way because we [Islamic Society of Milwaukee] established the relationship with the neighborhood. People came to us more as supporters than haters. They saw that what happened wasn’t something of our faith. This opened doors. People can come and visit us for open houses. More interfaith activities between the Buddhists, Christians, Muslim, Jew—all that.”

“We’ve [Garden District] had a Buddhist temple. We’ve got a mosque. We’ve got a Hari Krishna religious group. The Catholic schools have downsized and become charter schools. The Lutheran schools were always small and still are.”

“[Describing life before and after the area reorganized as the Garden District] When I first moved here everyone was hiding. I didn’t see people on the streets. I could not communicate with them. Today they are more friendly. They see me and you—I can see that you are not a stranger—you can see that I am not a stranger. We can sit with them, talk with them, share.”

“Entirely English [was spoken] then. Today there are some businesses within the Garden District that will have some signs in English and Arabic. The owners are bilingual.”

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-
Bombay Sweets



Today's neighborhood-
Houses on 13th St. & Holt Ave.

Today's neighborhood-Saint Adalbert Cemetery

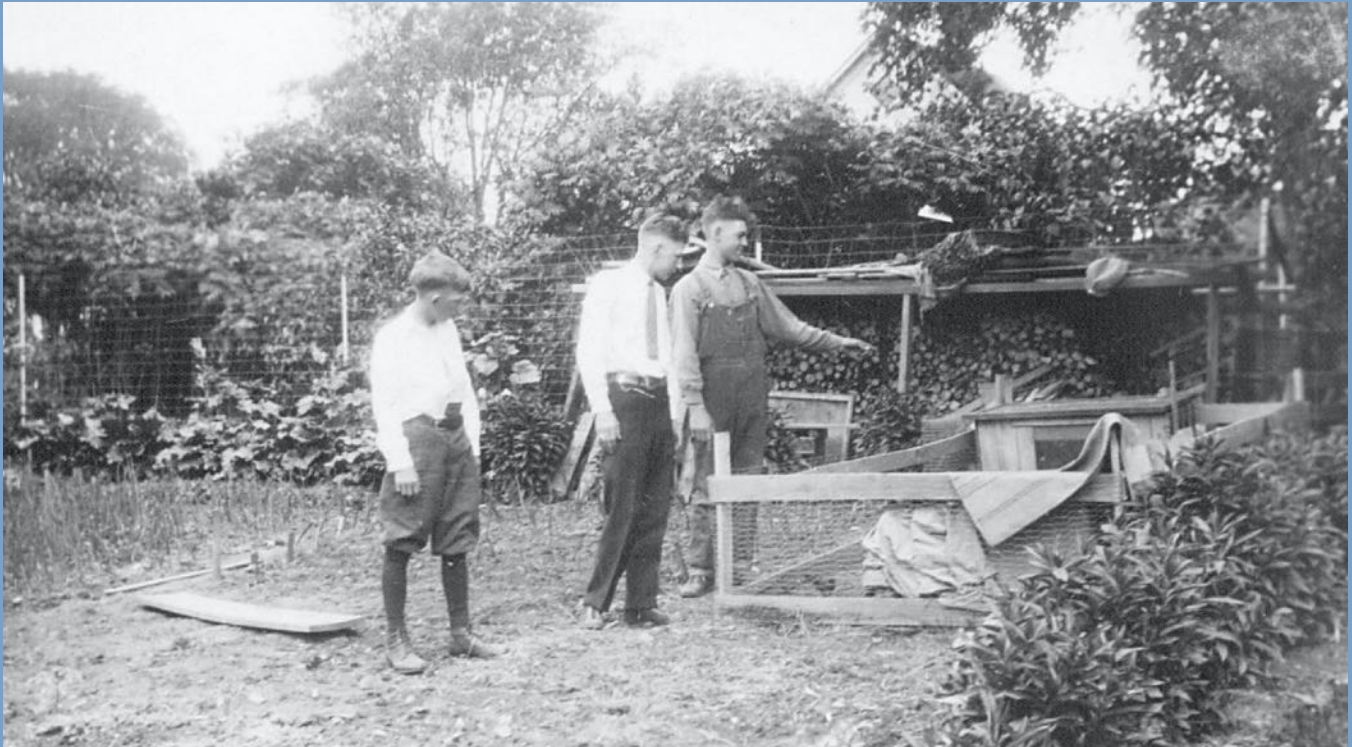


Today's neighborhood-
St. John Paul II Church



Today's neighborhood-
Holt Playground

OLDER PHOTOS SUBMITTED BY RESIDENTS



A Poultry Club Project in the 1930s. (Photo submitted by Dennis Lukaszewski of the University Extension)

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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